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*AN
ESCAPE
FROM
PHILISTIA*

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An Escape from Philistia.

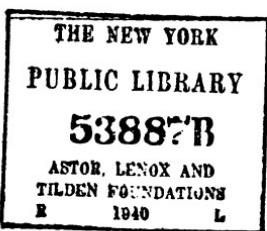
A Novel.

BY RUSSELL P. JACOBUS.

Bleibe nicht am Boden hesten,
Frisch gewagt und frisch hinaus!
Kopf und Arm mit heitern Kräften,
Nebenall sind sie zu Hause;
Wo wir uns der Sonne freuen,
Sind wir jede Sorge los;
Dass wir uns in ihr zerstreuen,
Darum ist die Welt so groß.

Goethe.

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TO
HARRY WHITELEY PATTERSON,
WITH A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF HIS VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS.

1945

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AN ESCAPE FROM PHILISTIA.

I.

“I see those Roxbury lots did go cheap,” Mr. Martin Price—that man of affairs, that *savant* in real estate—observed, without looking up from his paper. He was a heavy man of twenty-seven years. His smooth, phlegmatic face was framed in close-trimmed side whiskers. Having dined out, he was in evening dress. A toothpick projected from his mouth.

His uncle replied with a sardonic “huh”; and cast a keen eye over the financial news, as he sat, cross-legged before his fire, under a cloud of Havana

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smoke. Mr. Barret was thin and nervous. His grey-sprinkled hair exposed a well built forehead. The nose was large and aquiline; the mouth witty, under a moustache that formed an isthmus between the black boscage covering the cheeks.

Short as this dialogue had been, it elicited from Mrs. Barret a resentful rustling of her skirts. She was at her escritoire, writing for the "Friday Morning Club" a paper upon Ruskin, of whose works she had made a study that afternoon from a five page essay in a magazine. She nibbled her pen a moment irritably; then resumed her fluent flow of ink. She was still a handsome woman, stately in carriage, with her dark hair piled high upon her head. Her face, however, was growing sallow, and taking on an expression of fretfulness.

A piano lamp, with a shade of orange silk, stood by her desk. The lamp on the table was shaded with the same

— J Q V M

color, which blended cheerfully with the light of the wood fire.

A young man of twenty-three, with his long athletic frame stretched on a lounge, his feet projecting into space, was reading. The healthy color of youth lingered on his cleanly fashioned face. He had the capacious forehead of his father, and the same brilliant eyes, but less keen, more intelligent. His form and features evinced a greater equanimity than he might have expected from his parents.

He closed the book he had been reading, and put it on the table. Then, after thoughtfully twisting his black moustache, he folded his arms under his head and looked up at the frescoed ceiling with a smile of satisfaction.

At last he had studied through the whole of Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy." His education was finished; now he understood the universe completely—matter, life and mind. For some time he lay thus, musing over that

history of evolution. Then he turned upon his side and said:

“Father, throw me a weed.”

Mr. Barret picked a cigar from a box on the table and threw it with playful force.

“What makes you look so happy, Hal?”

“Oh, I have finished old Herby, at last,” the young man replied, biting off the end of his cigar.

“Now, Henry,” Mrs. Barret interposed, “I hope you will take up a broader course of reading and not confine yourself to that soulless science.”

“I think you had better get to work and do something,” his father said. “Here’s Martin, only a few years older than you, making three thousand a year.”

“Yes, Henry, your father is right,” Mrs. Barret pronounced. “A man has to make his living. He can’t devote his life to self-culture like a woman.”

The young man blew a violent puff of smoke as a gesture of disgust.

"Oh, the deuce! I could never make anything. I would lose in a week every cent I have, or ever expect to have."

Mr. Barret smiled contemptuously and began to discuss the money market with his nephew, who had maintained an indifferent silence. Mrs. Barret gathered up her papers brusquely and withdrew. Harry smoked on serenely.

He lazily regarded a little old dog asleep on the rug before the fire. This mongrel pet of his was, in every sense, a *bête noir* to the rest of the household. His back was like a withered hill in winter; his body of excessive length; his legs equally remarkable for their shortness, and his whole person emaciated to the last degree, excepting the abdominal region.

By a ludicrous association of ideas the young man recalled another scene. Five years ago in the same room, with the same persons sitting there, he was lying thus on the lounge. They had not then been long in their Boston

home. He was expecting to enter Harvard in the fall. But he abhorred the grinding of Latin and Greek; his passions were shot guns and sail boats, and the history of heroes who were marvelously proficient in their use. That evening he read the concluding achievement of such a hero. “‘Drop the jib,’ Frank whispered. And the sloop, silent as a ghost, glided into the cove and up to the side of the ‘Ariel.’ ‘Make fast,’ he cried exultingly. And once more Frank was master of the beautiful craft that he had built.” Thus the book ended, and was straightway hurled at the irresponsible dog, who, of all creatures, rejoiced in the lightness of prevailing literature.

The young man went disconsolately to the book-case. Dickens? Scott? Gibbon? Carlyle?—Pah! Cooper? He knew Cooper by heart. Then came a shelf of sermons and the lives of eminent divines. An odd title caught his eye, “The Unseen Universe.”

He took out the book, blew off the dust and turned its pages absently. A marked passage arrested his attention: "When scientific thought was once more directed to the subject of immortality, it was easily seen that the doctrine of the resurrection in its vulgar acceptation could not possibly be true, since a case might be imagined in which there might be a contention between rival claimants for the same body. We might, for instance, imagine a Christian missionary to be killed and eaten by a savage, who was afterwards killed himself."—Whew! This was a queer book for his father to have in his collection of sermons. The savor of forbidden fruit about it quite counterbalanced its somewhat dessicated appearance. And so he fell to reading it there on the lounge. Unexpectedly his interest deepened at every page; a new and strange fascination led him on; a boundless curiosity awoke within him. One

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by one the family retired and left him reading. And, as he read, the universe, which had hitherto been the paltry receptacle of boats and guns, widened and expanded before his eyes. He voyaged through the endless reaches of the heavens, peopled with glittering worlds. He saw the infinitude of clashing atoms, governed by changeless law. He read of the incomprehensible and all-pervading æther; of the measureless mysteries of living matter, its inexplicable origin and amazing evolution. He little understood the details of the subtle arguments. He missed entirely the aim of the book: to prove the possibility of a future life, a spiritual universe. It all served only to arouse within him an eagerness to understand the mechanism of the world. For what happy, healthy youth gives a penny-worth of care about another life? Is not this glad, living, passionate earth enough? And so late in the night he carried his half-read book to bed. And,

uneventful as the day had outwardly been, it was a turning point in his life.

Thus he recalled that evening of five years before, as he mused there on the lounge under the benign influence of his "Garcia," while his father and cousin discussed the intricacies of the money market.

II.

Boston had been the home of the Barret family for six years. Previously they had lived in New York City, where Mr. Barret had a seat in the exchange. He had a habit of making fortunes spasmodically, which, to a great extent, would melt away during the interims. This resulted from the practice of a method, well known among adepts in hazardous enterprise, of playing high when your luck is running. Its weak point is that, in order to take that happy tide at flood, a continual sounding is necessary. This is frequently discouraging. However, the Barrets succeeded in maintaining a social rank of fifty thousand a year and a brown-stone front on Forty—th Street, not far from Fifth Avenue.

Mrs. Barret, though fond of the display of prosperity on carriage drives through the park, withheld her presence almost entirely from social entertainments; this was largely the fault of Mr. Barret, who was always "too busy" to escort her. She occupied herself with "church work," and charitable enterprises, which her lord was wont to designate, with his troublesome felicity of expression, "fussing with the poor." But she found ample retaliation in bestowing unconscionable sums upon the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals and children and those devoted to the closing of libraries on the Sabbath, or to the draping of plaster casts in garments of sheet lead. Mrs. Barret's name and address may be found to this day in back numbers of certain periodicals relating to those societies.

There came at last a season when luck, that most lawless and unaccountable of phenomena, failed to correspond

with Mr. Barret's calculations. In short, he had nothing left but his "seat," which he sold for forty thousand dollars. Having fallen into nervous prostration, he went with his wife and son to a sanitarium. In six months he partially recovered his health, but his heart the doctor pronounced weak. They went to Boston and settled down in a little house at Cambridge, crowded uncomfortably with the splendid relics of the New York mansion.

Mr. Barret, for whom it was physically impossible to beguile his idleness, entered again into his old pursuit, only vowing never to carry stock over night but to return home with an unburdened conscience.

Among the neighbors who called on Mrs. Barret, there was a Mrs. Burt, who lived across the way in a small, but neat frame house. Her appearance was plain; her only prepossessing feature was a bright and glancing eye; but, to Mrs. Barret's bewilderment, she

evinced an acquaintance with Boston's *elite*. Mrs. Barret spoke of this to another neighbor:

"Who is that Mrs. Burt? She seems to be well received in Boston."

"Oh, Mrs. Burt? Don't you know? Yes, indeed, she is quite a lioness. She writes verses for the magazines, you know. Her lyrics are very clever, but her odes I think lack depth, lack philosophy. She relies too much upon her metrical talent."

"Indeed? I must read some of them," Mrs. Barret replied, and went home meditating. So it appeared that a mere paltry poem was as good as fifty thousand a year. Well, why on earth shouldn't she write a poem?

A new ambition awoke in her. And the outcome of it was that she joined a literary club, subscribed for many magazines, and haunted the public library in a feverish thirst for knowledge—even so that her health suffered.

One feels tempted, sometimes, to regret that the scientists ever passed that

law about accommodating one's self to one's environment. They might, at least, have confined it to those antediluvian creatures, which are fossilized, and beyond pain; for, since they have imposed it upon humanity, it has caused an incalculable amount of nuisance, as may be seen in the case of Mrs. Barret. And think, also, of the despair of her patient husband and her once happy son, when she discoursed eternally upon "Sweetness and Light," and even forced them to listen to a book called "Culture and Anarchy," till they fled shuddering to the streets and took nightly refuge in the theaters.

Now, while Mrs. Barret was gorging herself with "Light," and Mr. Barret was little by little over-stepping the modest limits he had assigned himself, a new misfortune overtook the family.

Mrs. Barret's brother-in-law, Mr. Price, fell off a ferry boat while crossing the bay to his home in East Boston, and was drowned. He was a widower,

and had worked for many years as a book-keeper in a real estate office, earning, at the age of fifty-three, a salary of two thousand a year. For a long time he had been sinking into despondency and melancholia. The insurance company proved suicide and his son was left penniless. Mrs. Barret, with characteristic impetuosity, welcomed him to her family hearth and offered him a home until he could support himself.

Martin was then twenty-one and had been working in his father's office for six years, earning at that time nine dollars a week. He had already manifested a marked talent for copying letters and adding figures, and his employers held him in high esteem. He was heavily built, with rough features cast in a sort of determined expression. He possessed all the qualities of a useful citizen. He was one of those sturdy, independent souls that rejoice in the consciousness of self-manufacture, and, as a natural concomitant, self-satisfaction.

He was industrious, self-assertive and affable—though at times somewhat gruff when there was no reason for his not being so.

Of course Mrs. Barret found him as little responsive as the rest to the gospel of culture, but to Mr. Barret he seemed to prove a marvelously potent “mascot.” The fortunes of the family rose with such rapidity that in less than a year they moved to the Back Bay and established themselves on Beacon Street, in a corner house with an obese brown stone front and a rear overhanging the broad mouth of the Charles. Here they were still residing when this narrative opened.

Mrs. Barret was eager to add the power of knowledge to the power of money. She had become painfully conscious of the defects in her education and was determined to rectify the matter, even at her advanced age. So she was still draining with the same voracity the Pierian springs, whose

principal source she had discovered in the literature of the periodicals. She had become a conspicuous pillar in the "Friday Morning Club," its secretary and most ardent supporter.

III.

All these changes in the fortunes of the Barret family were endured by Harry with the happy indifference of a boy absorbed in balls, guns and boats. During the season of prosperity in New York he had about everything he asked for, from books to bicycles, until he demanded a schooner yacht with a balloon jib and a crew. At a safe distance to leeward of this vessel Mr. Barret fixed a limit to his bounty.

Harry advanced but slowly in his studies till they settled in the Back Bay, when he was persuaded to join a class under a private tutor and prepare for college. He rejoiced exceedingly in the Beacon Street residence. His

third-story room looked out upon the Charles with its bridges and boats, and the opposing chimneys of East Cambridge. And only a block or two away was a boat house, and in it, his greatest treasure, a canoe with foresail and "dandy" of lateen rig.

Harry, at this time a well-developed lad of eighteen, was a picture of light-hearted youth as he walked with a school-mate up the avenue in his suit of light grey, his skull cap, of the same cloth, pushed jauntily back on his head, exposing his thick, black, slightly curling hair, with his level, black eyebrows, red cheeks and regular features. He bore himself with the gay carelessness of a young man conscious of well filled pockets and prepossessing looks. But he was not so enamored with the latter as to be absorbed in that effeminate ambition, prevailing among young gentlemen of surpassing parts, to exercise ones charms to the discomfiting of the other sex. He was just suffi-

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ciently self-pleasing to enter with zest into the social life offered him by the enlarging circle of his acquaintances.

It was in that winter, when he was looking forward to the college life of the next year, that there occurred that event which he considered the turning point of his life,—the event recorded in the opening chapter, the reading of the “Unseen Universe.” After finishing that book, he surprised his parents by purchasing several abstruse works on the speculations of the physicists, in which he became absorbed to such a degree that his academical studies suffered even more than they had done from his devotion to the manly sports. His spring examinations were a complete failure. He announced his intention to give up all thoughts of college and to educate himself; for he had discovered that classical study was a waste of time, a useless encumbering of mental space. So, as usual, he had his own way; and

began to read his books with an eagerness almost equal to that with which his mother read about books. His logical mind led him to study with a method and system which his mother lacked. He was saved, also, from her nervous disorder and morbid restlessness, by continuing his former exercises. He often went on horseback rides with his old friends; and sometimes inveigled one of them into his canoe. This, however, became a difficult matter, because of the multitudinous accidents which overtook that craft. But when friends were wanting, there was always that mongrel dog, who was then enjoying the glory of his prime, happily unconscious of the infirmities that awaited his age. He had been brought up according to the old regime, and so inured to hardships, that he bore with equanimity the constant capsizing of his master's vessel; and would sit composedly on the weather beam, while the water boiled along the lee side of the cockpit. He had been

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repeatedly knocked overboard, and half stunned, by the boom; until he had acquired a sufficient knowledge of nautical science to anticipate the jibing and the coming about.

The only outward change wrought in Harry by this close application to his scientific studies was a reaction in his social tendencies; he ceased entirely to call and to accept invitations, till he became a sort of pariah, as far as the fair sex was concerned.

His studies at first were confined to physical speculation, from which he derived a bigoted faith in the atomic theory; he believed implicitly in the reality of atoms, so that the universe presented to his imagination much the appearance of a chaotic game of marbles.

Then astronomy engaged his attention, and he became devoted to the nebular hypothesis.

In reading a volume of Huxley's "Lay Sermons," he happened upon an essay which epitomized, in that writer's lucid

fashion, the Darwinian theory of natural selection. It is impossible to describe how a conception of this sort, so simple, so clear, so evident, so comprehensive, effected a mind like his; it was like the emotions of a born musician when he hears for the first time the "Berceuse" of Chopin, or the ecstacies of a painter when the glory of Titian's "Assumption" bursts upon his eyes. Such inexpressible pleasure Harry found in the reading of Darwin, and the study of organic evolution.

These scientific studies had lasted for more than two years, when one afternoon he staggered into the house under the weight of Spencer's complete works. Skipping with little appreciation through the preliminary chapters on the "Unknowable," he began with lively interest the study of the "knowable."

Spencer seemed to weave the scattered threads of the young man's former readings into one vast fabric. The "First Principles" and the biology were famil-

iar ground; but in the midst of the psychology he found himself in the strange field, or rather swamp, of metaphysics. Here Spencer shattered, with the titanic hammer of his logic, that fondly cherished marble-game theory; and substituted that unsatisfactory, and ominously named "Unknowable." Harry resigned himself to this new view of things, and journeyed on through the Sociology.

We have already seen the triumphal consummation of this five years' course of science; he had mastered Spencer's system, and felt that his education was complete.

IV.

Hitherto Barret had proceeded with such inquisitive eagerness that his one-sided development had had no time to manifest its inevitable effect, but now as he paused to view the world from the standpoint which he had attained, he became gradually conscious of a growing discontent. There arose within his being inarticulate yearnings, which he felt but could not understand,—cries from the nobler faculties, over-crowded by the inordinate growth of the organs of analysis. There were also vague demands for sympathy, and impulses to accomplish something.

On many an aimless ride into the country he struggled with these inward stirrings.

What more was there to learn? Was not everything, was not that strong

animal beneath him, was not he himself merely a mechanical development of the unknowable world-stuff? What was there worth aiming at in life? Were not men all toiling to rear a structure which was not for them to enjoy, nor even for their children?

And as he saw of an evening the weary crowds returning home, every face seem lined with the marks of a stunted and degraded life, a life of hopeless and perpetual striving after low and absurd ambitions.

What was there worth the devotion of a man's talents and energies?

He was musing thus one night while sauntering through the Public Gardens, with a vague intention to hear an opera, when some one walking hurriedly in the opposite direction hailed him:

“Hello, Barret! Is that you?”

It was an acquaintance by the name of Thompson.

“Anything on hand to-night?” Thompson asked.

"No; nothing important. I thought of hearing 'Tick-Tack.'"

"Oh, they say it's rotten! You'd better come with me. I'm going to see some fellows on Chandler street. One's a regular old prophet. You would like him. Come on!"

Barret protested that he had no special predilection for prophets; yet, feeling a desire for company, he accepted the invitation and started back. As they were walking up Commonwealth Avenue, past its rows of leafless, melancholy trees, Mr. Thompson suddenly remarked as though the thought had just occurred to him:

"By the way, Barret, could you lend me a V? Ike has cleaned me out tonight."

Barret complied with this request and asked:

"Who is Ike?"

"Why, haven't you ever been to Ike's? He runs a wheel down on Washington street."

“What do you mean by a ‘wheel?’”
Thompson laughed indulgently.

“You are green, Barret! Why, a roulette wheel, of course. Did you think I meant a bicycle shop?”

Barret felt rather chagrined at his display of ignorance, and as they turned down Berkeley street he changed the subject.

“What are you doing, nowadays, Thompson? I haven’t seen you for quite a while.”

“Oh, I’m slaving in a damned bank, the meanest house in the city. I’d starve to death if the old man didn’t dole me an allowance.”

Soon they turned up a quiet street, and Thompson rang the bell of a neat, brick house. He nodded to the servant, led Barret up two flights of stairs, and opened a door without knocking. The room was filled with a white and odorous mist. The walls were covered with photographs of antique sculpture in oak frames.

A handsome young man, with yellow hair and moustache, was seated at a table. He had a long, but well-made chin, projections over his brows, and quick, bird-like eyes. He seemed to be working out some abstruse problem on a sheet of paper. In front of him a disk of wood, with numbered compartments, was slowly revolving.

Another gentleman, of twenty-five or six years, his stout person stretched out upon an invalid's chair, was putting, with much complacency, the finishing touches to a sketch, supported before him on a book-holder. A tube, issuing from his mouth, led to a reeking hookah on the floor, from which the white fumes arose. His face was round and beardless, with a broad forehead and great eyes. His hair was dark.

The light-haired gentleman, introduced as Mr. Perry, welcomed Barret heartily. The other, a Mr. Hurd, rose, shook hands, and offered him a chair.

“Won’t you accept the other tube of my hookah?” he said, with a courteous

gesture. "I always offer this to a new acquaintance, as a sacrament of friendship." He spoke with great deliberation and dignity, his broad smooth face glowing benevolently.

Barret accepted his part of this sacramental ceremony, and two dense pillars of incense ascended to the ceiling.

"This tobacco has a remarkable flavor," he suggested curiously.

"That is due to the excellent French cognac in the jar. It gives a rich savor to the smoke, and reminds one pleasantly of the blessed land of France," Mr. Hurd explained, each syllable that issued from his mouth accompanied by a portion of the object of his discourse.

"Is France your native country, Mr. Hurd?"

"Oh, no; my acquaintance with that divine land is limited to a three months' residence at Paris. But my single ambition is to return and make my home there."

"Why, don't you like Boston?"

"Like it! Did you ever hear of an artist who liked America—at least an artist who had to make his living? Indeed, Mr. Barret, I must confess I am not very patriotic; on the contrary, I have a most intense and unquenchable hatred for my native land."

"Say! you fellows," interrupted Thompson, who had been engaged in an earnest colloquy with Perry, "come and join the game. We are going to begin."

"Are you fond of roulette?" Hurd enquired.

Barret acknowledged that he had never played it.

"No, Thompson; I claim Mr. Barret as my guest. You and Perry may impoverish each other, if you please."

"All right," cried Perry, "I'll work my new system on Tom, and we'll have an orgy with the profits."

Thompson smiled disdainfully, as he seated himself behind a pile of counters and proceeded to manipulate the wheel.

After disposing of this interruption Hurd resumed his hookah.

"I don't understand," said Barret, "why the products of your art should be more marketable in a country over-crowded with painters than in one where they are scarce."

"Oh, I didn't mean that I could make a living anywhere with my brush. I meant that with my slender income—which I will tell you frankly is only six hundred a year—I might be able to exist at Paris, in that atmosphere so essential to an artist, the society of people who appreciate art?"

"But why don't you go to Paris, if you think this place is unfavorable to your art?"

"Well, you see my one time guardian, who is an uncle of Perry here, compelled me to go through the law school with that consummate Philistine, his nephew, and we are now working in a law office for the consideration of fifteen dollars a week. I am cherishing the Utopian dream of increasing my capital before I start to Paris; though I know

that if I ever become capable of earning any thing, I will be utterly ruined, as far as my painting goes."

"I understand: if you adapt yourself to the conditions of America, you will have to undo it all, and reconstruct yourself, when you go to Paris."

"Exactly so. And there could be no harder job, than to make an artist out of a money-coining apparatus."

Barret was on the point of making a sympathetic reply, when he suddenly burst into uncontrollable laughter. The cause of this explosion was an object suspended from the chandelier, a case containing a prayer book and hymnal, surmounted by a pack of cards and three dice.

"That," explained Hurd, smiling, "is Perry's trade mark, or rather, a hieroglyphic symbol of his personality. You will see its deep significance when you know him better. Will you excuse me a moment, Mr. Barret," he added, rising: "I will be back immediately."

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He went out into the hall, whence his voice was heard beseeching Sarah to convey to his apartment one-half dozen bottles of small beer. He then returned; and by the time he had collected together several large German steins, the beverage made its appearance.

“The trouble with Americans,” he said, while pouring for his guest and himself, “is that they don’t know how to live. Their great fault is intemperance; they are intemperate in their asceticism as well as in their sensualism and mammonism. They never stop to rest and enjoy. I haven’t seen a contented face in all this cursed land.”

“But, Mr. Hurd, we are still settlers; we are building up a country for another generation to enjoy; we haven’t time to think of ourselves.”

“Oh, I don’t think they ever will have the capacity for enjoyment,” replied Hurd. “If you walk through these streets on a holiday, you see the people lined up

in triple rows along the sidewalks, gaping and bored to death; they hate leisure as much as they hate work.— And when they do try to cultivate themselves, they go at it, as they do after wealth, feverishly, desperately."

Barret thought of his mother and said nothing.

"Well," the host went on, "it is the worst kind of an Americanism to grumble at it. Let me show you some of my sketches, Mr. Barret."

"I'm afraid I am too much of an American to appreciate them," Barret laughed. "I know nothing about art; but I am anxious to learn."

"I am afraid you are indulging in irony," Hurd replied, as he took from a drawer of his desk a small portfolio. "I have never received a word of instruction, except from a few books, which deal too much in generalities to be of any practical aid. The only time I get for work is in the evenings, and on Sundays when I usually sketch in

the suburbs. Here is the fruit of last Sunday's work. You have probably seen the spot."

Yes, he had seen it. It was a terraced garden, sloping its grey banks down to a bend of the Charles. To Barret it seemed very perfect, with the sombre old house, and the bright streak of sky breaking behind the leafless trees. An artist might have detected a faulty technique. But it manifested talent, and a strong, peculiar sympathy with the scene.

"I think I will have to give up this out-door work," Hurd went on. "It creates too much indignation among the natives. I don't think it is due entirely to the day; but largely to their contempt for such a useless vocation as art. Why, do you know, I hardly even dare to pause and observe a bit of landscape; for just as I have time to catch the effect, and take in one or two details, I invariably find myself surrounded by a crowd, grinning with

amazement and disgust. Then my only resource is to affect a cold and calculating demeanor, as though I were contemplating the purchase of that section of the country, and walk off with a worried, business-like air."

"Well, I don't blame you artists for wanting to emigrate," Barret laughed.

The plaintive artist went on through his portfolio, bemoaning his fate the while, till Barret rose to go. The promised orgy failed to materialize, thanks to the fallibility of Perry's "system." And Barret left with an engagement to drive with Hurd the following morning.

V.

Mrs. Barret was partaking of the breakfast in her usual stately fashion. Mr. Barret and Mr. Price, in their peculiar manner, were conveying the omelet and coffee around their papers to their mouths. Harry announced that he had made a new acquaintance, a very bright fellow, an artist; he thought his mother would like him.

“Well, I hope, Henry,” Mrs. Barret said, “that you will derive from his society a little more polish and refinement.—What school of painting does he belong to?”

“I don’t know. He says he has taught himself; but he expects to study in Paris.—You are not going to drive to church, are you? I promised to take him out in the buggy this morning.”

“Well, you may have the horses if you wish. I think we shall go to the New Old South to-day.”

Mrs. Barret, though possessing a pew in Trinity, was very irregular in her place of worship, owing to her strenuous demand for the highest talent. Her husband usually accompanied her. Mr. Price, however, appreciated the value of regularity and conservatism in these matters, and was a constant attendant at that ancient edifice on the corner of Tremont and Park streets. Harry, rejoicing in his new enlightenment, held all churches to be temples of superstition. This view his father looked upon with some uneasiness; his cousin, with contumacious indifference; and his mother, with the calm toleration becoming to her breadth of horizon.

After breakfast Harry ordered the team to be hitched to the buggy, and, at the appointed time, drove toward Chandler street. Already he felt a

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strong attraction to his new friend; in him he found the sympathy he had craved, and, moreover, the potentiality of a fresh influence.

As he drew up before the house, Hurd nodded a good morning from the window; and soon made his appearance at the door. He wore a silk hat, and a spring overcoat whose absurd fit was in perfect accord with the prevailing ordinance.

"I want to apologize," said Barret as they started, "for my forgetfulness in not asking Mr. Perry to join us."

"Oh, that's all right," Hurd answered, smiling. "Perry hasn't been in bed more than a few hours. It took him all night to lose his week's pay."

They drove rapidly up Beacon street, the horses stretching themselves out, and shaking their heads; the young men chatting gayly, as befitted youth and health and bright April weather.

There was a marked contrast between them: Hurd's person was inert

and fleshy, his face broad, smooth and genial, his eyes saving his neck from the trouble of turning, by their unusual way of rolling about; Barret's frame was lithe and muscular, his features clean-cut and regular, his cheeks of a healthy color, and his hair, brows and moustache black as a crow's feather.

Hurd's frank egotism soon drew from Barret an account of his scientific studies, and the *ennui* that followed. It was a delicious sensation, this unburdening of long-vexed thoughts before a sympathetic listener. When he had finished, Hurd exclaimed:

"Mr. Barret, you are one of the most enviable fellows I have ever met! You have indulgent parents; you have wealth and leisure, and ability to put them to good account. An ideal life is before you,—the chance to know every one worth knowing, to see every thing worth seeing, to do every thing worth doing. Ye gods!" he cried with pathetic humor, "I would sell my soul for such a future! Look at me, want-

ing all that, and nothing in the world but that,—and hopelessly cut off from getting it, by being chained down to this infernal law. Instead of being able to cultivate all my faculties, I haven't even a chance to improve my little talent for painting.—O Jove! O Apollo! to have freedom, freedom to grow, expand, to live as a man was meant to live,—to live like a bright, sunny-hearted Greek, to escape from this morbid atmosphere of nervous, restless drudgery!—This is no place for you; why don't you go where you belong?"

"And where is that?" asked Barret.

"Hunt for it," he replied laconically.

The houses of the Back Bay terminated abruptly. A brown strip of boggy land stretched along the Charles; beyond were the ugly buildings of Cambridgeport. On the left the suburbs of Brookline began to appear.

"Why! don't you think America would be congenial to my scientific line?"

“Well, I know very little about science; but there is no earthly need of confining yourself to that. You say you are already bored with it. You have laid a solid foundation for an ideal education. What you should cultivate now is the soul,—to use an obsolete expression;—take up literature, music and art.”

“But I have neglected the languages altogether. And, besides, I don’t believe I have the slightest taste for literature.”

“Try it, and see,” Hurd said. “There is no hurry in your case. Get a tutor in French and German. And dip into English poetry. Greek, of course, is the finest of all languages; but it is a dead one, and may come later.”

“Do you read much Greek, Mr. Hurd?”

“Oh, no: I haven’t time. It is too laborious a process for me. But there is much of the fine Greek spirit in French prose.—Ah, those old Greeks

knew how to live. Such culture is impossible now; there are no more men, only a lot of abnormal limbs."

"Yes," Barret agreed: "Nowdays every one must be a specialized unit in the body of the state."

"I wish I were a state," said Hurd.

The road left the river, and began to climb the hills. On each side were neat country homes.

"This is such delightful weather, Mr. Hurd, won't you consent to be my guest for the day? We can lunch at the Glenrock Hotel, and drive back in the afternoon."

"With pleasure, Mr. Barret. But won't your parents be worried if you are missing at luncheon?"

"No: they won't care; they are used to it."

So they rode on over the hills under the fresh April sunlight; and talked of many things. Soon they reached the hotel, and resigned the horses to the stablemen, who greeted Barret with a

generosity evidently based on the principle of reciprocity. Then the two friends sought the dining room and selected a table by a window that opened upon a pleasant view of hills covered with dark cedar and gleaming birch. Barret ordered a bounteous luncheon, than which is there anything more potent to fasten the bonds of friendship?—at least, it proved most effectual with Hurd. The dainty, pliant bodies of Blue Points, the mysterious, seductive *pâté de foie gras*, the deadly but delightful lobster salad,—all washed down with mellow Burgundy, and digested under the thin, blue, thought-inspiring smoke of soft Havanas, till the expansive countenance of Mr. Hurd beamed with all the radiance of the rising sun.

“Ah, *la belle rencontre!*” he at length exclaimed, peering through his glass. “Allow me, Mr. Barret, to pronounce a fitting benediction upon this happy event:

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“ ‘O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth !

O, for a beaker full of the warm south,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth ;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.””

He dwelt with an eloquent emphasis upon each word, in a kind of thirstful ecstasy, bringing a Bacchic music from the lines.

“I believe I should like poetry after all,” said Barret.

“Ah, but there is only one Keats.”

They lingered long at table, watching the sun sink toward the hills. When they started homeward, Hurd casually remarked:

“My guardian lives near here, back of those woods. I should like to present you some evening. He has a pleasing daughter.”

“Oh!” laughed Barret. “Are you going to follow the conventional custom, and marry the guardian’s rich daughter?”

"I think I shall deviate from that custom; she is not rich enough. And, then, I have conscientious scruples against love; I consider it the most extreme and dangerous form of intemperance. Swift and inevitable is the retribution that follows marriage."

Thus they rode on in pleasant converse, and when the beautiful city came to view, the sun was low, and the level light gleamed on the golden dome of the State House, on the countless spires, on the red peak of Trinity, on the slender lily-tower of the New Old South, on the Baptist tower and its carved angels with their silent trumpets.

Barret, judging it best to take up one language at a time, began the study of French with a tutor, whom he made do most of the work. He also invested in the poems of Keats, a volume in gorgeous tree-calf. The odes pleased him much. The "Endymion" and "Hyperion", however, were as yet impossible tasks.

To Shelley he took with far greater enthusiasm; perhaps because he found the very antipodes of science in that Israfel of poets, "whose heart-strings were a lute,"—in that seraphic herald of the west wind and the cloud. He was moved almost to a passionate love for him, when he chanced upon that marvelous overture of "Alastor":

"Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries.

* * *

I wait thy breath,
Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forest and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man."

Shelley seemed to take up that dreary doctrine of the world's unknowable essence, and transfigure it into a subtle and exquisite Pantheism, infusing it with the glory of heaven, and the majesty of God.

These, perhaps, were the happiest days of Barret's life. He completed the downfall of his friend's art by enticing him nightly to the opera. On Sundays Hurd would conduct him through the museum, unmercifully criticising the collections, denying the authenticity of every old painting, and gloating with ironical laughter over the casts.

VI.

“Come, ladies, fill your mugs!”

Perry had this absurd habit of applying feminine epithets to all persons and things of any gender whatsoever. He and Hurd had been to the theater with Barret, who was to be their guest for the remainder of the night.

“The night is yet young!” Hurd declared, replenishing his stein. “Allow me to propose another toast: to the immortal Booth!—Do you remember how he gave those lines about Yorick’s lips: ‘Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table in a roar?’ It is like the whole book of Ecclesiastes condensed into one sentence. It impresses me

just as Holbein's 'Dance of Death'; it makes you reflect that those lips of Hamlet will soon be in the same dusty pass. And then you think of your own lips."

"Say! this is getting lurid!" Perry screamed. "Fill his pot, somebody."

"Well," laughed Barret, "the lines that most affected me were those just after Hamlet received the challenge, and Horatio urged him to refuse: 'I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldest not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter.'

"There is something deucedly pathetic about that," said Hurd; then turning to Perry: "Now, my son, let's hear what specially struck you. Don't say that questionable song of Ophelia's; and shame your father, who has taken so much pains to train your taste."

"No," Perry grinned: "I was most impressed with the size of the button on Hamlet's sword, when I saw it coming out of the King's back."

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“ Ah, Perry, that is worse than I expected even from you. Barret, you wouldn’t believe what countless tomes of divine poetry I have read to that fellow; and he never could appreciate a line, except in verses of an erotic nature. He does delight in that sort. He knows hundreds of amorous selections by heart; and takes great joy in imparting them to his friends.”

“ Say, Barret, let me give you my favorite from Keats. You’ve been reading him; maybe you remember it.”

“ Do you mean that thing in ‘Endymion?’ ” Hurd asked.

“ Yes.”

“ Well, you’d better explain that it’s a river that is guilty of this gush, and not a mortal.”

“ Oh, the devil! that spoils it. But never mind.”

So he began with rapt expression and shining eyes:

“ ‘ O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I

Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how
To entice her to a dive! then stealing in
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
O that her shining hair were in the sun,
And I distilling from it, thence to run
In amorous rilles down her shrinking form! ”

“Now,” said Hurd, “that is an excellent example of a new method I have invented for training the higher tastes by the assistance of the lower. A youth would take to that sort of poetry like a duck to water; and before he could avoid the consequences, he would find he had contracted a lasting fondness for good literature. Perry and I think of compiling a volume of these selections, and calling it ‘The Golden Treasury of Rank Lyrics,’ or ‘Poetry and Putrescence, carefully selected from Chaucer to Swinburne.’”

“It would have a tremendous sale,” Barret said. “Let’s hear some more, Perry.”

“All right, I’ll give you one from Shelley.”

"Yes," said Hurd, "we can find only one suitable passage in all the works of that poet."

"But it's a terror!" Perry added; and immediately gave voice to a long effusion concerning "a deep and speechless swoon of joy."

When this was accomplished, Hurd's cigar, which had been so reduced as to need supporting on the point of a knife blade, was at last entirely consumed. Sadly observing this fact, Hurd spoke:

"If we are to dine at Barret's tomorrow, I think we had better retire."

So they went to their bed rooms, and in a while issued forth in their pajamas, and sat down for a last bottle of beer. Then Perry knelt, and with the utmost *sang-froid*, offered up a prayer, after which he rose and lit a cigarette.

"Good night, Barret. My alarm clock raises the roof precisely at seven."

As Hurd got into bed with Barret, he said:

"You see now the deep significance

of Perry's symbol which you observed under the chandelier."

Harry's two friends the next evening were presented to the Barret family. They were heartily welcomed, though by Mr. Price in a somewhat tentative manner. At table Perry was seated on Mr. Barret's right, beside Mr. Price; Hurd by Harry, and on the right of Mrs. Barret. During the repast, Mr. Barret amused himself and Perry at Harry's expense; a perpetual chorus of jollity arose from that end of the table.

The luxurious atmosphere that always attached to Hurd's person was amplified by his evening dress; a nimbus of serenity seemed to hallow his face. Mrs. Barret was saying:

"Henry tells me you have adopted art as a profession."

"Indeed, Mrs. Barret, he misrepresents my situation. He should have said I want to adopt art; but the fact is law has adopted me."

"Oh," she replied disappointedly, "I thought you were entirely occupied with your art. But the law is a very intellectual profession, and a very lucrative one. I wish you could persuade Henry to try it. Here he is nearly at his twenty-fourth birthday, and he has not decided what to do yet."

"And why should he do anything till he feels inclined? I am sure if I had such indulgent parents, the law would never have caught me in its clutches."

"Why, a man ought to make his living."

"But when he has a living, why should he make another? Let him grow a little, before you ask him to bear fruit."

"By the way, Mr. Hurd,"—Mrs. Barret changed the subject in a way characteristically feminine,—"do you favor the realistic or the impressionist school?"

This question was followed by others of like intelligence,—a jumble of cant

words, of whose meaning she manifested no conception. Hurd replied desperately in the same strain, feeling as though he were conversing with a phonograph. He had small taste for women past their prime; being devoid of beauty, they appeared to him joyless spectacles indeed. He consoled himself, however, by keeping the servants busy with his glass.

After dinner the gentlemen retired to the smoking-room. Mr. Price, over whom a cloud of utter silence had rested, excused himself, pleading important business. A bright wood-fire was burning, as the weather was still cool. Mr. Barret brought out his best cigars, great imported weeds in silver vestments, which quickly restored Hurd's peace of mind. The four men drew up their chairs around the fire. Mr. Barret, in high spirits, was telling his favorite story about a Hebrew dealer in old clothes, to whom a customer had returned with a moth-eaten overcoat:

“‘Modts? Modts? Vat you expect to get midt a fife tollar ofercoadt? hummink birdts?’”

Perry, whose repertory was large, wisely forbore to utilize it, feeling that the tone of his stories would not harmonize with the occasion. Hurd recounted several of his reminiscences, and jest was heaped upon jest, till Mr. Barret smote his knee amain, and Hurd quaked and gurgled and shook all over, in ecstasies of immoderate laughter.

VII.

After this pleasant evening, Hurd called often on Mr. Barret; a friendship arose between them, to Harry's surprise and pleasure.

On those light-hearted days he was to look back wistfully; for they were most peaceful, most untroubled. Days of spring-time, they began with a brisk walk, and a half-hour with Hugo or Gautier; then came long porings over Tennyson, whose magic wrought an ever-growing charm. In the afternoons he would take a lazy sail under the slow winds of May, with the old dog for a mate. And the evenings would be enlivened by opera-going or deep converse with his friends. Early, careless, cloudless days, we hardly stop to taste them before they go.

Many a Sunday afternoon did Barret and Hurd drive over the New England hills. One of these drives was ever memorable. A fresh spring day it was, sweet with May blossoms blown on the bright wind. Mountainous white clouds journeyed overhead. The new leaves were surpassingly gay; the grass, rich and dark. Robins hopped and twittered on the lawns, peering up askance at all the trees; blue jays screamed; crows spoke solemnly afar.

"Jove!" Hurd exclaimed, "there's Mame and her mother, now."

Barret saw, walking toward them, a rather small young lady, and a very large old one.

He agreed with Hurd's criticism; the girl was pleasing. Her hair was soft and lusterless, a pale bronze, a light gold-brown. Gold-brown, also, were her veil and hat and feather, lending to her face that uniform, rich tone that Luini loved to give to his Madonnas. Her hazel eyes had a tender, half-serious

look which her mouth belied. When she smiled, her under lip was a curving bow; her other, the straight bow-string.

The stout lady was talking fast in a high voice. Her hair was grey; her nose keen-edged. A peculiar pallor rested about her mouth, giving her an expression of perpetual excitement. When she saw Hurd, her husband's former ward, she executed a tremendous signal with her parasol.

"Now, George," she commanded, "you must come right home with us, and stay for tea. Bob Perry is coming, too."

Hurd, without responding to the invitation, introduced his friend.

"How d'do, Mr. Barret. Just drive on to the house with George. We'll be there in a minute." Mrs. Child seemed to take for granted they had driven out expressly to call on her.

"Not at all!" Barret cried, jumping from the buggy, "I insist upon your riding, Mrs. Child."

He struggled unselfishly to assist in the elevation of that lady's person. And at last he found himself walking under the trees with a girl whose hair, veil, hat and feather were all of a golden brown. And this was the first girl he had met for a long two years. And so he answered constrainedly in his deep man's voice. And she? she did not speak her words; she laughed them, which is more like singing. And how describe with unmelodious words her laughter's music? It lasted all the way, making the world wonderfully pleasant, opening to Barret a new field of learning, a new and fascinating phase of culture.

They turned into a spacious yard, fenced with a coping of rough stone. They walked up the gravelled driveway; and when they passed the elms and oak trees, the house was visible underneath the tall plumy pines. It was a low, two-story house, painted, after the colonial fashion, yellow with

white trimmings. On the wide piazza was Hurd, fanning himself with his hat. Barret and the young lady seated themselves; and Mrs. Child came out with her husband, a tall man of about fifty years, with a beard of silvered russet, and smooth lip. He wore an attitude of placid dignity, an expression of serene satisfaction, attainable only by those whose opinions are as unalterably established as their trade.

“Ezekiel,” said Mrs. Child, “this is George’s friend, Mr. Barret.”

Mr. Child removed his glasses, cleared his throat, and said with great deliberation and courtesy, as he shook hands: “M—now, Mr. Barret, I am very glad to see you. Let us sit down. Our nephew, Robert Perry, will be along soon.”

And so they sat there; and Barret talked to the young lady with the pretty hair and eyes; and the sun stretched out the long shadows of the pines over the smooth lawn. And soon Perry came whistling up, with his vest unbut-

toned; and shouted a surprised greeting at his two friends; and kissed the young lady in an off-hand way, much to Barret's annoyance. Then they all went into the dining room, where, as is the provincial custom, the Sunday dinner did coldly furnish forth the supper table.

Barret was seated beside the young lady, and on her father's right. There was a solemn pause. Then to the unsuspecting guest Mr. Child courteously inclined his head; and invited him to say the grace. The shock was confounding; the room rocked dizzily. He caught a vague glimpse, as through a mist, of Hurd's eyes rolling in ghoulish joy, of Perry with a napkin in his mouth, of the others waiting with bowed heads.

He could not afterwards recall the tenor of his supplication; it seemed satisfactory. Miss Child, to relieve his embarrassment, immediately plied him with her laughing prattle.

"Have you known George and cousin Bob very long?" she asked.

"Only a few months," he answered; "but we are great friends."

"Of course, you have seen George's drawings. Aren't they ravishing?"

"Yes: they are wonderful, all of them. And haven't I seen your portrait among them?"

"Oh, yes: he made me a queen; Aspasia, I think, he called it,—or some foreigner or other.—But I'm too small to make a queen," she laughed.

"Oh, it is possible to be queenly, without being tall," he returned, confused by a slight gurgle from across the cold roast-beef.

After supper Hurd protested against going to church; "for," he said, "the horses are starving, and we'll have to drive back immediately." And it was possible that Barret might have forgotten them; and gone to church with great resignation.

They found the horses hungry, blanketless and shivering, tied to a post in the back yard.

"Never mind; we'll warm 'em up," Perry said, as he squeezed himself in between Hurd and Barret.

So they drove homeward in the still, darkening twilight. Barret, as it appeared, was sleepy and quiet. Suddenly he roused himself at something Perry was saying to his chum:

"Did you hear Mame talking about 'Aspasia or some other foreigner'?"

"Yes: Mame is troubled with microcephalosity. She inherits it, I suppose."

"I don't know; but she's a little fool," the impulsive cousin pronounced. "Say, Barret, what did you think of the children?"

"What children?"

"We use that plural form," Hurd explained; "it is ungrammatical, but very expressive."

"Oh! I liked them very well. Does Mr. Child always make his guest ask the blessing?"

"Yes," said Hurd; "that awful rite is

immemorial in the family.— How did you like the girl?"

"I think you were right; she is pleasing."

Barret did not stop with his friends; but drove home, and went to his room. He sat down before the open window. Beautiful, oh, beautiful the moon-flooded night, the wide, moon-silvered water.

VIII.

Barret did not consider it expedient to postpone long his call at Glenrock; nor did he think it necessary to be accompanied by his friends. One evening he vanished from Boston; and in the space of a half-hour reappeared, walking very hurriedly up a wooded yard toward a low frame house, behind which a bar of golden sky was dying.

He waited in the plain little parlor, with its stiff chairs, and old-fashioned piano of red rosewood, its white marble mantelpiece, supporting a wax-work in a glass bell, its green-papered walls, and their transcendent landscapes. The lamp was not yet lighted. The windows were all open. The air was sweet with the approach of

summer. Innumerable insect orchestras filled the evening with far, shrill plaintive music.

And why was he so restless, so excited? She was coming down the stairs. She entered.

Her mother was out, walking to and fro upon the earth in the interest of foreign missions.

No, they didn't light the lamp; some very beautiful things are sometimes easier seen without the aid of vulgar oil.

What did it matter what she said? was it not the full of spring-time in their lives, the dawn of summer in the world?

There had been a church-fair yesterday, he heard. And he should have come; for she sold the candy—Stone's best chocolates,—and would have given him a discount.

What did it matter what she said? for she laughed it all with those sweetly curved small lips. And so the musical

duet went on. And he asked if she would take a ride some day. And she said, of course, if mama would let her. And Barret lingered.

He found himself at the station. The last train had gone. What of that? it was only eight miles to Boston; and he felt just fit for a walk, a three-hours walk.

How exquisite was the world, lying in pale lights and black shadows under the white moon; the undulating road, the graceful spreading elms, the immense pines with their sable tops, the lace-work foliage of the willows silvered in the light, the distant river, flashing its white coils at intervals,—how exquisite. He felt an awe, a reverential love for all this, for the majestic Something that lay behind all this, that moved the soft breeze through it, and covered it with a white mist to sleep.

It was after midnight when he reached his room. He did not go to bed; he

lit his lamp, lay down on the lounge, and read Tennyson's "Maud." It seemed as though he had never read it before, such a strange new power it had, thrilling him like passionate music.

"It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea."

In these days a total change came over Barret, a transformation inevitable in his case, and one experienced by not a few, though none the less divine and mysterious. Former possessors call it a valuable experience; though for a repetition they do not languish. It is very like an overdose of bhang: it is a tremendous excitant of the fancy, lifting one entirely out of earth, and giving a taste of pensive bliss; then comes the slow reaction, the long fading of visions into common day, and thence into the sadness of twilight. And the experience is apt to induce disorders in the nervous system.

Barret's former sociability was exchanged for a reclusive tendency. He shunned the genial Hurd, and the irresponsible Perry. He spent most of the time—when away from Glenrock—sailing alone and moody in his canoe. For if he was blessed with the privilege of visiting that ethereal, golden-haired and divine creature, he should prepare his spirit in solitude, and even by fasting.

His exaltation might be called religious. A tenderness possessed him, a universal sympathy, mingled with a sensitive revulsion from any sign of vulgarity. The sight of maidens on the eve of womanhood filled him with an infinite pity. What future awaited their delicate and tender beauty?—a hopeless bondage to some brutal man,—the sweet shrine of loveliness to be desecrated.

And with this tenderness, he felt a religious devotion to what he could not name, a Presence in himself, in men

and maidens, in mothers and in children, in the rippled gold of the river, in the lush green of the shores, in the waving leafage of the trees, in the gorgeous tapestry of evening clouds; and all centering and focusing in *her*.

IX.

It was more than a week after that Sunday, and Barret had not seen his friends of Chandler street. It was night, and he was issuing from a confectioner's with a great box, when some one caught him by the arm.

"Hello! Barret, where the deuce have you been hiding yourself?"

And Perry dragged his reluctant friend along to his room. They found Hurd sitting in his invalid's chair, under his wonted cloud, reading.

"Well, Barret," he said, smiling a welcome, "you are a stranger."

Barret sat down, feeling that his old friendship had strangely departed. That careless Bohemianism had now small attraction.

"Yes, I've been a little out of sorts.—What are you poring over, Hurd?"

"Oh, I'm dipping into my Plato. I have just come upon an interesting passage. Listen what Socrates saith to Phaedrus:

'Εἰ δ' ἔστιν, ωσπερ οὖν ἔστι, θεὸς ἢ τι θείον δὲ "Ερως, οὐδὲν ἀν κακὸν εἶν· τῷ δὲ λόγῳ τῷ νῦν δὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ εἰπέτην ὡς τοιούτου ὄντος.'

— which is, being interpreted: 'If Love be, as indeed he is, a god, or something divine, perhaps he cannot be in any respect evil; yet both our late speeches spoke of him as such.'— Remarkable old bird Socrates was, wasn't he?"

"Yes, rather," Barret replied with somewhat heightened color.—"Say, where's the other mouthpiece of your hookah?"

"That's so," cried Perry, "damned if you didn't come near forgetting the sacrament.—Do you know, Barret, something's the matter with the old prophet: he's sort of losing his memory. Either his head or his heart is getting soft. He mopes around as

grumpy as an owl. I believe he's crushed on some la-a-dy." The last word was comically drawled.

"No, my son. My only love was for the little Venus of the Capitol, and it was hopeless. I lacked the means of winning the affections of any lady, whether flesh or stone; I suppose it would take a hundred thousand cash down."

"Well," said Barret, puffing vainly at his end of the tube, "it seems the sacrament is out. I think I'd better go; I'm rather sleepy this evening."

"Why, what's the hurry?" Hurd protested.—"Come around tomorrow night, will you?"

"Well, I—I have an engagement. But I'll try to get off."

"And say, Barret, won't you take my translation of the *Phaedrus*?"

"Oh, thanks, Hurd; but if it's so good, I think I'll buy it.—Good night."

The next evening Barret found it impracticable to "get off." And Hurd,

meditating, glum and forsaken, over his hookah, reasoned with himself from the premise that Barret's engagement was constant, to the conclusion that it was permanent.

"Lord!" Perry said, "I should like to have Barret in the family. Why wouldn't you like to see him your guardian's son-in-law?"

"Well, you know, Perry, that, thanks to my poverty and my exceeding great wisdom, I have eschewed love; and so I am inclined to squander my affection upon my friends. I feel guilty of all this disaster. Why couldn't we have introduced him to some other girl?"

"Yes," answered Perry, who had been listening with great reverence: "he was a sure goner on the first one."

The prophet nodded sadly over his hookah; but replied not; neither did any word issue out of his mouth.

Meanwhile Barret's transformation grew. His religious awakening was due to no spiritual emanation from the

girl; it was the flower of his soul's growth, blossoming under the sunlight of love. He read the story of Christ in his Bible, using as a commentary Renan's "Vie de Jesus," than which there are few more eloquent with the purest spirit of Him "qui a fait faire a son espece le plus grand pas vers le divin." In fine, the spiritual life that, for a space, he lived was most rare, because it was so natural. Born of no fears of divine or human reprobation, it entered his heart almost as spontaneously as once two thousand years ago it entered into the pure soul of the Nazarene.

And in this uplifted life there came an impulse toward expression,—to give voice to this flood of new feeling in musical and mystic words. And so he wrote many an ardent song. However crude, they had the rare quality of being spontaneous and sincere. These artless lines he carefully preserved; he would show them to her some day.

X.

Often on these beautiful June days Miss Child and Barret drove out, with dog-cart, tandem and footman in fine raiment. That posterior ornament they both considered a superfluous vanity. And this was the manner of its disencumbrance.

They had driven to the house on Beacon street. Miss Child had been inveigled into the parlor. Harry had gone upstairs to get a volume of Tennyson; she had promised to read "Maud." He brought his father down; and presented him to Miss Child. Mr. Barret was very gallant; he declared he would ride back with them. So that resplendent, liveried creature was dis-

missed with an order to bring out the phaeton. And Harry drove to Glenrock, with the young lady and his father behind. And thereafter they always rode out alone; and returned with Mr. Barret as duenna.

And on that first ride, how Mr. Barret jested with the girl! how he overwhelmed his son with pallid jealousy and flushing shame!—and all to Harry's unmixed pleasure. What a flirt his father was! and how the girl laughed back his gallantries! And Harry whipped the horses till they flew; and all the world was radiant with sunshine.

“Did you know that Hal here is a poet?”

“No! is he?” she laughed in her rippling voice.

“Yes: he reads nothing but poetry, nowadays. And I have the strongest circumstantial evidence that he writes it, too. I think it’s all your fault, Miss Child.—Don’t you believe it?” And he pointed to his son’s flaming ears.

And all the air was ringing with her laughter.

“Now, Miss Child,” that malicious parent went on, “they say young ladies have a great influence over young men; and I do, indeed, believe it. Can’t you cure him of this poetry craze; and get him to do something. He is the laziest fellow in America.”

“Certainly,” she laughed, “I’ll try. But what do you want him to do?”

“That’s the trouble; he doesn’t know anything,—except candies; I think he knows about candies. Suppose I set him up in a candy store.—Then, there’s another thing, jewelry. Lately he has been poring over catalogues of jewelry. And he seems to have a taste that way, for he marked several very handsome—”

“Oh, father! don’t give away my private affairs,” Harry cried in terror.

Then Mr. Barret took pity on his son; and devoted himself to jokes of a more impersonal nature.

When they reached Miss Child’s house; and Mr. Barret assisted her

to the door, and had shaken her hand most affectionately; he ascended into the front seat, and smote his son upon the knee.

“Hal, she’s a beauty! Now tell me all about it. Is it fixed?”

Indeed, Harry was beginning to think it should be “fixed”; yet he still postponed the fixing of it. The charm of those rides, those walks was too much to be jeopardized.

Many a night sitting in his bedroom, Harry unburdened his hopes and fears to his sympathetic father. And he would laughingly charge that affectionate parent with being in love himself. And, truly, the way Mr. Barret courted the girl was most remarkable. In fact, he said on several occasions what almost amounted to a proposal.

Yet with all his high spirits, there was noticeable at times something hollow, sad and forced in his gaiety.

An evening came when Harry took supper with the Childs, and went out

afterward with the young lady into the yard. They walked through the garden path, bordered by grape-vines and currant bushes, out over the meadow grass to where it ended suddenly in a wooded bluff. They sat together on a rustic seat. The view from there was wide. A river, winding from the south, turned just below them, and fleeted to the west between the hills. It was a scene such as Turner loved. The sun had not yet touched the horizon. The river, flaming through all its length, followed to an ocean of golden vapor that filled the distant valley. And all the green verdure of the shores was changed by the evening's alchemy into a shining, precious lustre.

Below them the world lay, golden and still. And there Harry spoke and it was "fixed."

XI.

They sat a long time there on the brow of the bluff, while the sun sank, and the glories of the west faded into grey, and the moon, lonely in a bare heaven, silvered the mist that rose along the valley. Then they walked back, lingering under the shadow of the trellis.

In the parlor Barret had an interview with Mr. Child. He stated his case simply and directly; Mr. Child encouraged him with a smile.

“I have only two points to enquire into, Harry,” he began, tapping twice with his eye-glasses on the arm of the chair: “first, are you a Christian?”

Barret hesitated a moment, feeling the ambiguity of the question; then answered, “Yes.”

"What church do you belong to?"

"Oh, I haven't thought of joining any church. Is that important?"

"Yes, indeed," Mr. Child laughed indulgently: "I could never allow my daughter to marry a man who was not a good Methodist,—or at least, a member of some orthodox church."

Barret protested he had not the slightest doubt the Methodistical creed would coincide with his own views. Mr. Child made that a tentative condition; and went on to the second point:

"Now, as to financial matters, what are your plans?"

"Well, my plans are not definite. My ambitions are all in the line of literature. I hoped to marry your daughter, and travel with her abroad, to study foreign languages and people; and prepare myself for philosophic and sociological work. My mother approves of it; and my father is wealthy: so I don't see any need of my going into business."

"Oh, my boy, you don't realize that four-fifths of all young men are ambitious to distinguish themselves in literature; and not one in a thousand ever succeeds. I am afraid you young fellows take to literature because you don't like hard work."

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Child: but when I don't need any more money, what is the use of my devoting all my life to making it?"

"A man can't be happy without some steady labor; and he can't be certain, either, of not coming to want some day."

"Well, I'll promise you this, Mr. Child: if after a sufficient preparation, my literary attempts are a failure, I will give them up, and turn to business. Isn't that fair?"

"Well, well, Harry, we'll talk about this some other day. I've no doubt that it will come around all right."

So Barret started homeward, wrapped in supreme felicity. He rested his head

against the car window, looking out, and seeing nothing.

Could it be true that all was settled? Was it possible that he might be traveling in a few short months with her by his side in some delicious land, talking together in the soft music of Italian, or conversing with some rare genius in the polished speech of France?

He dreamed of sitting by her in some marble villa, terraced with tropic flowers, islanded in blue, aerial waters. And thus, as the train rushed on, he conjured up those sweet and short-lived visions of fame and love.

He let himself into the house with his night key. Every one seemed to have gone to bed. The sitting-room was vacant, save for the withered dog, curled up in a patch of moonshine. Martin Price was out in Kansas, studying land. Mr. and Mrs. Barret had gone to their room. A light was in the room, and his mother was talking; but he decided not to tell them the good

news till morning. He went up to the third story, and threw himself gleefully into a chair.

How delighted his old father would be!—There he was coming now.

When he entered, Harry cried:
“Father, it’s fixed at last!”

Mr. Barret did not answer. He dropped into a chair. He seemed out of breath. His labored panting slowly calmed; but he did not speak. He sat moody and silent, pulling his moustache. A deep dejection went from him to Harry.

“Oh, Father, what is it? what’s the matter?”

“Everything, my poor boy, everything.”

“What do you mean, Father?”

“I mean we’re beggars, Hal; we don’t own the clothes on our backs.”

“Oh! how did it happen? Tell me, Father.”

“Ah, Hal, it’s terrible, terrible for you, and at this time! It began about

two weeks ago. Western stock that Martin reccommended smashed up. It was only a matter of fifty thousand; but it turned my luck. Everything went wrong after that. I was carrying an awful amount of 'L. and O.'s.' It was the surest thing I ever tried; but that old thief, Golding, got his hands on it,—and it went. Then I had to sell my seat and my life-policy, and mortgage the house. And to-day—well—it's gone! We're ruined, utterly ruined."

"Now, Father, cheer up; don't worry; don't worry about me. It's probably a good thing for me; it will make me work. I'll be a new supply of energy for you; and with your experience and my strength, we'll soon pull up again. You know you've been through this before."

"No: it's different now. Everything is gone, everything. Then, Hal, I'm not the same; something's the matter here with my heart.—Come, put your hand.—Listen."

"Oh, that's just the excitement, Father. You'll be all right tomorrow."

"Well, perhaps so, Hal.—Good night.—And remember, whatever happens, my boy, be brave; and don't forget your mother."

His father kissed him; and left the room. Harry heard him reel against the wall as he walked.

He lay wakeful in his bed many hours.

Oh, it was hard! It would mean long years of work before he could marry Her,—years of work,—and perhaps, never.

But what can discourage love, love which is as strong as death, love which many waters cannot drown?

The windows glimmered grey in the morning, before he slept.

Suddenly a shriek stabbed through his dreams. He sat up trembling. God! what nightmare! What was he dreaming?—Oh, death! it was true; his mother screamed his name.

He rushed to her room. She was standing straight, her head thrown back,

her hands clutched in her hair, laughing the laugh of a mortal at the last lash of fate.

And there on the bed, his father! the head sunken to one side, with that fatal relaxation of the neck.

Rest, rest, at last, with the smile of peace on the lips.

XII.

Mrs. Barret, in recent years, had been the enthusiastic, but superficial, devotee of every novel creed, as it emerged from the caldron of speculation. Having now no accurately defined, life-enwrought belief, whose practiced priest might lead her to a melancholy resignation, she sank unshielded beneath the naked force of circumstances,—alone, uncomforted, wildly rebelling, weakly despairing.

Harry, also, lacked a definite creed. But he was a man, and inspired by love and poetry. He could draw a misty consolation from such verses as these of Tennyson:

“What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But though I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less.”

Not for a long time did he realize the terrible, full meaning of his loss; the

confluence of the many late events, the quick, total change of situation kept him in a feverish half-consciousness.

Martin Price telegraphed his sympathy to Mrs. Barret; and informed her that he would be back in five days.

In the afternoon Mrs. and Miss Child called. The news of Mr. Barret's death had been telegraphed to them. Harry went down to the parlor.

"Oh, my dear boy, this is a terrible blow to you and your poor mother. Can't we do anything? How is your mother?—So suddenly, too! and just when you were so happy!" said Mrs. Child in the space of one breath.

"Mamie," he said in a low voice, "I want to explain that my father failed yesterday, though I had no knowledge of it. I will forget everything that was said last night. I will release you from promises made under false impressions; you didn't know I was a pauper."

"But I won't release you, Harry," she said, putting her hand with his ring on it upon his knee.

He caught her hand; and kissed it.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Child, “we know all about that, Harry. Of course, it will make a great difference; it will be a long time before you are able to marry. But with your talents you ought to make your way rapidly in business.”

“Well,” he said despondently, “I don’t know.”

In the evening Hurd came.

“Barret,” he said, “I feel this, old fellow.”

They talked long and earnestly in the dim, gas-lighted parlor. Barret felt his friendship return, and more than return; he found in Hurd a new vein of sincerity and tenderness.

“Perry sends his sympathy. He wanted to come; but I wouldn’t let him. I want to talk to you alone.—Barret, I don’t know any one I admired and respected more than your father.—How did this happen?—I saw about his money troubles in the paper.”

“Yes, that caused his death; the despair, with his heart disease, killed him. His losses were started by a poor investment in some worthless land that our cousin recommended.”

“Then he is really guilty of all this! — He ought to help your mother, if she needs it.”

“I believe he is not of that sort.”

“Good Heavens!” Hurd raged, “isn’t he indebted for five years’ board?”

“His conscience is probably kept by the law,” said Barret grimly.

“It ought to keep his person, too,” Hurd growled.—“What are your plans for the future, Barret?”

“My mother can’t stay in Boston. She may travel, or visit some of her friends. As for me, I have to work.”

“I tell you what, Barret, you’ve got to share my rooms and bed. I’ll not hear of any thing else. We’ll work like Trojans, till we are able to live like Greeks! What do you say, old fellow?” And Hurd held out his hand, which Barret shook,

The funeral was a small and private one. Mrs. Barret was confined to her bed, seriously ill. There were no near relatives of the family, except a sister of Mrs. Barret, living in Colorado; and she did not come. Hurd, Perry, the Child family, and a few old business men were all that sat with Harry in the gloomy curtained room, while the minister delivered a prayer, with the usual distressing references to the bereaved.

The small procession started to the cemetery. Hurd sat silent with his friend; and stood beside him at the grave. The day was sadly beautiful; the grass, the sunshine and the gleaming marble, sadly bright. The expressionless voice of the minister, the calling of the birds, the sight of the open grave and the lowered coffin were to Harry far-off and half-real things, a story heard in a doze.

He rode home; and went to his mother's bedside. She was talking in light laughter.

“Well, Harry, where have you been?
—Oh, yes, you went riding with father,
didn’t you? — It’s a nice day. But it’s
cool; I’m very cool, except my head,
except my head.—Did he catch cold,
Harry? Did he wear his overcoat?—
Tell him to come, Harry; I want to
speak to him.”

Suddenly he realized everything.
He went up to his room.

XIII.

"Acute cerebral congestion," the doctor explained to Harry, as they were sitting, two days after the funeral, by Mrs. Barret's bed. Wet towels were on her shaven head. Her face was burning, the blood-vessels swollen on neck and temples.

"She may pull through," the doctor added cheerily.

"Mr. Price," a servant announced.

Barret found him sitting, with his legs crossed, composedly picking his teeth. He uttered his condolences in the same emotionless tone that he would have used, had the ceremony been one of congratulation. Then after receiving,

with polite sympathy, the intelligence of Mrs. Barret's condition, he said: "I will see the creditors. I hope they will allow you to keep the house for a week or two."

"If they would be so generous!—my mother can't be removed till she is well."

"Oh," Mr. Price nodded dubiously, "they might take her to the hospital in an ambulance. You see you are at their mercy. But I'll do all I can to propitiate them; and persuade them to wait. I've no doubt I can manage them.—It's hard luck, Henry. There won't be much left, I'm afraid. Of course, you'll have to go to work. Would you like me to get you a place in our office?"

"Thank you. But I will not begin for a while yet."

"As soon as you like; and the sooner the better. Of course, you'll have to begin at the bottom. If a beginner gets any thing at all nowadays, he is

lucky." With these final encouragements, he took his leave, adding at the door: "I hope your mother will soon get well. I'll call to-morrow."

Barret paced the floor a while, reflecting upon the amiable character of his cousin, his tact, delicacy, sympathy, generosity and gratitude.

"So this is a specimen of those with whom I shall have to compete,—to adapt myself to their ways, to become one of them!—Gracious heavens!" he mused, "a fledgling errand boy would have a better chance than I!" Then he thought of Mamie and his helpless mother.

He sat by her through the long night. It was the crisis of her illness. She was sunken into a death-like coma; her breathing was imperceptible; her pulse flickered faintly on.

A sickening dread of death, and an equal loathing of life came over him,—a sudden clear perception of the sum of human fate,—the insignificance of life,

the imminence of the grave. He saw it all in a flash; then shook it from him, clenching his teeth. Well, it was too absurdly brief to worry over, too ridiculously short to make much difference.

In the morning Mrs. Barret was breathing better; she was plainly reviving.

Her recovery was slow; for with the return of life, came the returning consciousness of her sorrow. All day long she would sit in her chair, feeble and speechless, her face sunken and transparent, white as death, under the hood that covered her shaven head. For hours she would remain in that torpid state, her eyes closed, or looking vaguely into space; then suddenly her wasted hands would knot and writhe, and her features work in agony.

An awful sense of loneliness settled over Barret, as he sat in the great silent house, with his ruined mother, those those hopeless days. Home and family,

leisure and pleasant study, and the life he loved were gone. The future was a rough-ringed mountain of Purgatory; though his Beatrice waited on top.

He wrote to his aunt in Colorado. She answered, inviting her sister to come and live with her; the climate was so beneficial, she said. This plan was agreed upon.

Ten thousand dollars were realized from the settlement of the estate. And Barret started west with his mother. His aunt, in a comfortable frame house in the suburbs of Denver, welcomed them kindly. He stayed only a day or two; then set out for Boston, with a determination to work.

XIV.

It was late at night, when his train rolled into Boston. He went to a hotel. In the morning he would see his cousin; and begin work at once.

He rose betimes; and, after a hasty breakfast, he set out. He was walking through the Common. The morning lay radiant on trees and grass. The fresh, early air had the stimulus of wine. No loiterers were visible; laborers hurried briskly. Earth and her children were alive.

Barret caught the contagion of this energy. He commenced to plan a great deed that would result in fame and fortune,—a book on the pantheism of to-day. He was seized with a strong

desire to prolong the glorious inspiration, dreaming it out under the trees,—to postpone his commercial debut. But no: his cousin expected him; he had promised to begin to-day.

He had hardly seated himself in the boarding house, when Mr. Price hustled in, with his hat on, and a portion of his breakfast in process of mastication.

"Well, Henry, ready for work, are you? Just in time."

As they waited on the corner for a car, Barret asked:

"What kind of work is it, Martin? Will it be hard to learn?"

"Not very, for anybody who can hold a pen," said Mr. Price.

"But," Barret enquired, with some hesitation, "what is the—the salary?"

His cousin, with the air of a benefactor, announced: "Five dollars a week."

Barret said nothing; he took out his watch; and examined it with great in-

tentness, without obtaining any knowledge whatsoever of the time. His face was pale; some elasticity had departed from his carriage. As they seated themselves in the car, Mr. Price said:

“That is an unusually good salary for a beginner; it is because you are taking a vacated place.”

“But,” said Barret forlornly, “I can’t live on that; I’ll have to draw on my mother’s little income.

“Of course,” his cousin assured him; “you can’t expect to support yourself entirely for several years. You see there are five men between you and me; their salaries are seven, ten, fifteen, twenty and thirty a week. Sometimes your salary is raised a little without your advancing; but you can’t expect to rise a step unless one of these five men leaves or dies or gets fired. The only thing to do is to stick to it; and make yourself valuable to the firm.”

This concise exposition of the commercial life plunged Barret into speechless gloom. Glorious prospect, indeed! —working from eight till six for the price of one dinner a week, sustained only by the hope that death or disaster might remove his fellows.

The car stopped at the post-office. Martin led him into a narrow street of tall buildings. One of these they entered by a side stairway. The office was on the second floor; it was not over well lighted or aired; the thrones of the superior powers occupied the space by the front windows, while the places appointed to the hirelings extended in a row toward the nethermost darkness. On the inferior terminus of this row was Barret's desk. No one else had arrived, excepting the diminutive errand-boy, who whistled at them with great eyes.

Barret learned that his function would be to copy out-going letters, to seal them in their envelopes, and to ap-

ply stamps thereunto, *a coup de langue*. He remembered hearing Perry speak of the position of stamp-licker.

During the minute preceding the stroke of eight, the five clerks made their entrances; hastily gave to their desks an aspect of industry; then examined the new-comer from their respective elevations. The head clerk was an old man, with a hanging underlip, a meager moustache, bulging eyes, and a head bald, except for a fringe, like a full beard, on the back of his neck. The second was a hungry looking man of thirty; he wore an expression of affected hopefulness. The third was one of those prevailing gentlemen who are always violently clothed, and rejoice in a parabolic nose, and a heavy, black moustache, curled up stiffly at the ends. The fourth was a large, clumsily jointed youth, with accentuated features, and a smooth, serene face. The countenance of the young man beside Barret was invisible; his head, which he held in

both hands, seemed to be temporarily incapable of the normal functions of that organ: from his fashionable person there emanated an odor, as of a complicated punch.

Barret set to work with all the sensations of a convict beginning a life-penalty; but without his assurance of daily bread and nightly shelter. If, as they say, novelty is the spice of life, the spice of Barret's new career had departed in less than an hour.

The air became hotter and closer; the clerks removed their coats. Suddenly Barret's neighbor, whose animation had hitherto been completely suspended, roused from his trance; it was nine o'clock; the superiors were entering. They ascended to their airy quarters, whence, after lighting their cigars, they issued ordinances.

Barret resumed his work. By ten o'clock it became intolerable; he felt exhausted—almost faint. He would have given five years of his life to

escape into the fresh air. Oh, the insufferable monotony of those letters! the nauseous operation of sealing and stamping them! Must this go on for days, months, years?—Never before had he experienced such a struggle as this—to keep bent over his desk in that hot, dark atmosphere. Several times he was on the point of giving up; only the prospect of disgrace, starvation, the loss of Miss Child restrained him.

“But what use?” he reflected. “Even if, in the course of time, these wretches are removed, my salary will be only fifteen hundred a year; I couldn’t marry on that.”

He despaired, with a sense of his undeveloped assertiveness, his inability to cope with those giants of acquisitiveness. He was thrown into the arena, unarmed.

At the stroke of half-past twelve the five clerks arose as one man, donned their coats, and vanished. Martin took Barret to a cheap restaurant, where he

had better get his lunches; it was not an appetizing place; the table cloth was ragged and stained, ragged and stained was also the decrepit waitress. Martin ordered a glass of milk and a sandwich; Barret regaled himself with a like selection.

To endure the afternoon was even harder than the morning. Yet all things in this world have one redeeming feature—an end. Six o'clock came at last; and he was free.

Stiff from his cramping labor, weak, exhausted from physical and mental distress, he joined the tired throng of the closing day. Even the dusty air of the streets, the sunlight on the tops of the tall buildings soothed him with the strange rapture of relief. Up the narrow side-walk of Washington street the crowd bore him in its funereal stream, which at intervals flowed into the gutter around the vortex of a sensational window.

He was very hungry; but he determined to go straight to Hurd's room,

so as to be sure of finding him. He struggled on in a half-faint; he had but one desire, one object—he must see Hurd.

XV.

Hurd, smoking alone in his room, was astounded to see Barret, white and speechless, totter in, and drop into a chair. Hurd rushed for his precious cognac; poured an unconscionable quantity down his friend's throat; and demanded the nature of his affliction.

"Why, I've begun work; and one day of it seems to have used me up," he smiled painfully. "But I'm starved; I came for you to take dinner with me."

"I have dined; but I'll go and sit with you. Come on. There's an excellent place near here."

It was Hurd's favorite resort—the Letheon. It contained a number of

rooms, all very small: one was fitted up with an antique fire-place, tapestry and armor; others, with estimable pictures of fruit and game. Hurd led his friend to the innermost and smallest room, holding two polished walnut tables, and hung with countless English colored prints. An odor of cigar smoke pervaded the air.

"They have everything here," said Hurd, as they sat down, "but table-cloths, ladies and ice-water."

Barret perused the menu with some embarrassment.

"With my salary of five dollars a week, how much should I spend for a meal? Let's see: say half of it for a room, that leaves - - - thirty-five cents a day for food,—about ten cents a meal! — Waiter, bring me a tenderloin with mushrooms, and potatoes hashed and browned, and a bottle of Pommard."

Hurd broke into one of his silent eruptions of laughter.

"No, Barret! no more wine. Let me order the mead. Franz, two Mün-

cheners, and two cigars, please.— Ah, Barret, that beer is as good as a trip to Munich. Never mind the wine, old fellow; it wont take long to Bohemianize you.—Now, about your room,—you promised to share mine; so you'll have your whole salary to spend for board. You can get your breakfasts and dinners where Perry and I do for four and a half a week.—But say, how do you like business?"

"I have the lowest place, with no prospects of rising. My work isn't exactly the grandest use that could be made of the human organism—it consists mainly of licking stamps."

"Well, I guess we are about equally enamored of our situations." Hurd smiled sardonically. "There's no more chance for a law-clerk to rise than for any other clerk. In fact, nowadays, without a large capital, or the strongest influence, to back you, it is simply impossible to make any progress in business,—except for a few who are pecu-

liarily fitted for their work, who love it, give themselves night and day, body and soul, to it."

"But I'm certainly not fitted for this. Isn't there any thing else they would let a fellow do?"

"Not here. This country is one huge mill; you've got to grind in it—or starve!—The trouble is, Barret, you've been educated, instead of being manufactured into an article of commerce; you've learned to think, instead of to scheme. And there's no market for thoughts."

"And you advise me to stick at this wretched useless slavery?" Barret asked, while buttering a roll.

"I don't believe you could get anything better." Hurd blew a slow reflecting puff. "You've no idea how hard it is to find any situation at all.—Did you notice Downer there in the office—a swell looking bird?"

"Yes: he seemed to be rather incapacitated."

"He usually is, in the mornings; he's a great friend of Perry's. Now, Downter isn't paid a cent; his parents are rich, and he has all the money he wants. He goes to that office just because he hasn't any thing else to do, or because his father wants to make a business man out of him. Anyhow there are hundreds of those fellows who actually beg for a chance to work for nothing; and, as for the poor devils who have to work, it is a mystery how they all keep alive."

"Hurd, are we spontaneous variations of the Yankee animal, or are there lots of others who hate this life as much as we do? I can't believe many of them are satisfied."

"No, Barret; half of them are unfitted for this commercial drudgery. We are not afflicted with genius; we have merely a natural desire to cultivate our little talents, and to find a work that suits them. There are thousands like us who have no taste for business, and

consequently no chance of success in it, they all hate it as much as we do."

"And yet," Barret cried, "they have to devote themselves, body and soul, to a drudgery they detest! By Jove! When a man is forced to work for a salary that will hardly keep him alive, and is not even allowed to choose his occupation, I call it slavery!"

"My dear fellow, don't call it that," said Hurd soothingly. "The slaves were some times quite resigned to their situation: they knew their masters wouldn't kill them with overwork; they were certain of food and shelter; they were all able to marry, and raise a family. With their songs and dances, and their pipe in the evening, they were content. Theirs was a gay, careless life. Ah, how I envy those old negro slaves!"

XVI.

The alarm-clock, which Perry had compelled to agitate its abhorred hammer at half-past six, woke Barret with a shuddering dread. As he sat with his two friends in the dreary boarding-house, before the eggs and coffee, he felt the dizzy faintness of apprehension. Nor was this feeling alleviated when Perry, after a searching diagnosis, pronounced that the eggs were sick.

Barret finally realized that he was again compressing his lungs over the detested desk, putting to their least engaging use his tongue and fingers. The events of the previous morning were reduplicated to the minutest de-



tail. His desire to escape was harder to overcome. If there is such a thing as a positive ennui, amounting to agony, that is what he experienced.

At the lunch hour, Hurd and Perry came, and led their forlorn friend to a place of refreshment, a restaurant swarming with ravenous humanity. Most of the men were seated before a long, high counter. One of the few tables was reserved for Hurd. The three friends called desperately for sandwiches and coffee. Every one around them ate with almost super-human speed.

"Barret," Hurd said, pointing to the row of men on stools, with their mouths lowered to within six inches of the plate to shorten the transit of knife, fork and glass, "the next thing for you to learn is how to eat in a business-like way. The economy of time is the essential of competition; and it extends even to the mastication of a sandwich, or rather to the swallowing of it, for

the chewing should come later, in the fashion of the ruminating animals."

Barret smiled pallidly.

"Oh, let business rot!" Perry moaned, "if a fellow can't guzzle in peace for five minutes."

"Ah, my son, 'thou wast not born for work, immortal bird.'"

Barret's complex passion for real estate lost none of its intensity during that afternoon and the following day. Then came the restful Sabbath. He slept till noon. After dinner he started for Glenrock. He had not been there for two weeks; it seemed longer. He felt the old excitement as he walked up the yard. No one was on the porch. He waited on a linen-covered parlor chair.

At last she came, in a dress of cool pink muslin, with the shyest little exposure of a full white throat, the soft gold of her hair coiled bewitchingly. Was this exquisite creature really his, all his? He hardly dared to kiss her,



“The porch is cooler,” she pleaded.

But he protested that the parlor was delightful.

“The chairs are so uncomfortable,” she uttered with the daintiest *moue*.

He suggested that the lounge was quite luxurious. She yielded with dutiful docility.

“Now, tell me about your work, Harry.”

“Oh, not on Sunday. Let me talk of you, nothing but you.”

“No:—keep on your side, Harry!—that wouldn’t be an interesting topic for me.”

“Oh, try it! I could be so eloquent.”

At last he was persuaded by the granting of a irresistible reward, a kiss of her white fingers. And how enthusiastically he spoke of real estate, of his important duties, of the imminence of great advancement.

“And how soon will you be making three thousand? We couldn’t”—she ended with a blush.

He kissed her; but said nothing.
He felt suddenly depressed.

When the supper-bell rang, it seemed impossible that the afternoon was gone already. Her father and mother came in. They had returned from a walk; and had been sitting considerately without.

At table, Barret's depression was not relieved by the demand for a second recounting of his commercial experience. It required a much greater effort to reproduce the optimistic tone which he had so well rendered in the parlor. Mr. Child listened sympathetically; and said:

"Well, Harry, you are beginning rather late in life: but don't get discouraged; perseverance and hard work will bring success in the end."

In the end?—Barret felt that the advent of that happy termination was somewhat vaguely located.

Mrs. Child offered no sentiments upon the situation. It appeared that

she was absorbed in censorious reflections on recently gathered evidence of a neighbor's depravity.

"Mame, do you know those Whitneys are carrying on worse than ever?" —As she spoke, the habitual pallor about her mouth increased.—"When we went down we saw the Whitney boy in his back-yard, playing tennis against the barn; and coming back, we heard the girl playing dance music,—like as not they were dancing, too. Why those people are tolerated, I don't see! They're a disgrace to the town—a disgrace to civilization! What do you think, Ezekiel?"

Ezekiel, it seemed, had not thought so profoundly upon the matter; but he acknowledged that what thoughts he had were in perfect accord with those of his wife. Miss Child supported the family verdict even more warmly. Barrett, being appealed to, asserted meekly that the conduct of the Whitneys was truly remarkable.

After tea, he sat on the porch with Mr. Child, while the ladies dressed for evening service. The old people went ahead; Barret followed with Miss Child through the slow-departing summer twilight.

The church was one of those unimposing, white, wooden buildings, with a steeple erecting itself on the corner of the facade. They sat in the family pew; the church slowly filled. The congregation consisted partly of aged men and women, but mainly of youths and maidens, whose presence was manifestly a means to more engaging ends. The young ladies were endeavoring to suppress their risibilities, excited by the gallantry of their abashed escorts, who wore a guilty, shame-faced expression that their cynical asides ineffectually concealed.

The minister, a short, somber, smooth-faced man, arose; and prayed that all light and frivolous considerations might be suspended, and worldly hearts made susceptible.

The short pause that followed was broken by a shrill, solitary note, prolonged and piercing, from some wind-instrument that served in place of organ. A small, sandy side-whiskered gentleman stood up, and faced the congregation, expanding his mouth into a surpassing O, prophetic of melody; then, with one accord, the wind-instrument, the leader, the clergyman and the congregation gave utterance to music.

The sermon was of a painfully reviv-alistic type; neither a gentle invitation to join the select band, nor a distress-ing depiction of the other alternative, but a sarcastic objurgation of the unre-pentant outsiders,—as who should say: “O must foolish, most wretched, how dare ye refuse to accept our opinions on this matter?”

The members of the church congrat-ulated themselves, smiled approvingly, and observed the outsiders, who quaked fearfully, and endeavored to smile also.

The sermon ended with a very

pathetic story, and the announcement that while hymn 411 was being sung, those only who were safe, and united to the church should rise; but the others would be given an opportunity to come forward, and abase themselves.

Three half-hysterical girls rushed down the aisle; and fell on their knees. The elect began to rise. Barret in an agony of embarrassment, was left sitting, isolated, disgraced, beads of sweat oozing from his head and body,—the focus of reprobation.

XVII.

At last Barret was released. He breathed in the cool air of the night, like a quivering victim from the rack, every fiber of his being wrung with torture.

“Wasn’t it a nice sermon, Harry? Was n’t it awfully impressive?”

“I was impressed by it,” he answered equivocally.

“And little Mr. Tomkins who led the singing, is n’t he sweet?”

“Yes: he pleased me more than the minister.”

She detected a shade of irony in his tone; and at once divined a suspicion of heresy.

"I don't believe you are a bit religious!" she said.

"I wasn't so before I met you," he answered; "but truly I am now."

"Well, if you are a sincere Christian, why don't you join the church? Why didn't you go up to-night; and confess it before men?"

"Oh, I don't like that sensational exhibition," he said bitterly. "Religion is too sacredly private to parade that way. Besides, I object to being bullied into it."

"I don't believe you have any intention to join the church, and confess your faith, at all!"

"I will, if you want me to.—But I think it would be acting a lie, giving a false impression to go up there with those scared girls, when I don't feel that way myself. My religious emotions seem to be utterly different from theirs."

"Oh," she said, "that is your wicked pride. You hav'n't the true humility.—What do you believe, anyhow?"

“I don’t know anything about creeds and confessions and dogmas; but I have, in my untaught way, a love and reverence for God, for the God we see ‘in the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul, in the clod’; and I have the same sort of feeling for Christ. Is n’t that religion? And why is it necessary to class myself with a lot of people who are animated by nothing but a selfish terror?”

“But it is necessary,” she declared stubbornly; “Christ commanded us to do it: ‘Whosoever will confess me before men, him shall I confess before my Father’.”

He left her at the door. She took a kind farewell. She did not seem angry; but he fancied she was disappointed in him. And he himself had seen the first fading of the apotheosis in which his love had placed her.

“Will I have to exhibit myself in that vulgar ceremony?” he mused in the train: “to stand up before that gloating

crowd, and bare my most private feelings!—Cursed degradation! it will debase my whole character.—Well, it seems essential to conform to popular prejudice.—And yet, the bravest and the best refuse. It stops all growth in irretrievable stagnation.—But she wishes it, she wishes it.” Suddenly he thought: “When shall I have that three thousand?”

The hopelessness of his situation lay revealed. He pulled his hat lower to his eyes; compressed his lips; folded his arms tightly; and reflected on the six days servitude of the coming week.

In his descriptions of English prison-life, Charles Reade has analyzed the maddening experience of labor at a crank to the production of nothing more valuable than friction. Barret’s work offered a close parallel, save that it was much less conducive to health, and gave no promise of final escape. While the labor became more automatic, and the fever to flee less acute; the hopeless

monotony grew more oppressive, the degradation of the life more insufferable. His plan to study and write in the evenings proved impossible; he found himself incapable of thought, nearly of motion. He would lie on the lounge, in lamentable colloquy with Hurd; or make a short call at Glenrock, where his role of optimist became constantly more difficult.

He suffered that most unhappy of human experiences—the consciousness of gradual retrogression. He felt himself unavoidably sliding back on the scale of perfection—a physical, intellectual and spiritual degeneration. He lost the glow of eyes and cheeks, the elasticity of carriage. He had no time, no energy for scientific study, or wandering speculation. As for the higher ranges of poetry and religion, which he had so hardly attained, he was like a frog at the bottom of a well,—blind to the changing fringes of the evening, the jewelled mysteries of the night. Love itself lost all its holiness.

XVIII.

ON the morning of the next Sunday, it was arranged that he should meet Miss Child, and take her to the service at Trinity Church. A famous divine from New York was to preach.

He felt almost happy again, as he walked beside her through the spacious streets of the Back Bay. It was early when they arrived at Copley Square; he stopped to admire it a moment.

In the variety of its surrounding architecture, it is typical of our complex civilization—the Art Museum, a fantastic brick building, suggestive of Dutch models; the low white facade of the library, Greek in its chaste beauty; the New Old South Church, in the

delicate and slender grace of the Florentine Gothic, with its elaborate ornamentation, its tall tower, like a frail stem, blossoming into a belfry; and the dark, rich, heavy architecture of Trinity, in the massive style of the Romanesque,—a grey, sculptured mountain, capped by a red peak, the transepts, the nave and the apse extending with equilateral symmetry, and the tasteful, cloistered passage leading to the chapel.

They waited a tiresome while in the crowded vestibule. The throng of men and women pushed and edged and scrambled around the door; it was like the rush for tickets at a theater. At last, a bell signaled; and the visitors were admitted by sections.

The interior of the church had some of the peculiar impressiveness of a great cathedral—the vast, dim space, where noises lost themselves; the massive arches that supported the hollow central tower; the maroon walls, with their frescoed reproductions of Titian

and Veronese; and the solemn organ music flooding all.

A man, with a loud voice, was making adverse criticism of the church; the ladies, of each other, in lower tones.

A sudden pause announced the entrance of the minister. He was a tall, broad man, with that rare, half-smiling, preoccupied expression peculiar to men who think. He knelt in a short prayer; and the service began.

The self-assertive gentleman behind Barret uttered his responses in a most conspicuous voice. Several ladies turned around to observe him. Miss Child tried to join in the service; but gave it up. Barret did not try.

At length, the sermon began. It was delivered rapidly, and without notes, as it were the process of inspiration rendered visible. It had that strange exalting influence that emanates from genius. Barret met every word with a willing acquiescence, a responsive leap of the spirit.

The sermon was a plea for growth. It ended thus: "Religiousness is not a sudden change, accomplished in an hour; it is an endless effort. It is not the mere putting on of a dress, the adoption of a creed. It is this—to shake off the stagnation of 'deathful selfishness'; to begin a ceaseless journey toward completeness; to nourish those divine seeds of perfection that God has given us; to train our senses to the fullest appreciation of His universe; to bring our organs into the most delicate harmony with the eternal laws; to raise our intelligence to the grandest grasp of God's infinite revelations; to expand our sympathies, till, like Christ Himself, we include within our life all life, we are in touch with all being, from the far-darting soul of genius, to the torpid savage, sleeping in the sun, from the hollow sighs of the dying autumn wood, to the infinite glories of the sunset, where God Himself seems standing."

The benediction was pronounced; the service ended. Instantly a pleasant hum of converse arose, as the congregation poured into the aisles. Barret walked out in a sort of exalted dream, uplifted into a finer atmosphere, loathe to descend. Miss Child pulled his arm.

"Look at that dress. Did you ever see such colors? What taste!"

XIX.

When they were in the train, she said, as she unbuttoned her glove:

"I didn't like that minister. He didn't seem orthodox; he sounded more like one of those Unitarian free-thinkers."

"Yes, he was remarkably devoid of platitudes."

She quizzed him with a glance of suspicion.

"It didn't seem like a sermon at all," she declared; "it was just like a lecture."

"But don't you think what he said is true—that to accept a creed is a small part of the religious life; the main thing is to grow more perfect?"

"Oh, that may be very well; but the one thing needful is to believe."

Barret realized suddenly the danger and the futility of contesting the opinion of a woman. He attempted a few light jests on the passing landscape; then lapsed into silence, musing over his situation.

How absurd it all was, anyhow,—to marry her would be the very pinnacle of folly! Formed in molds of the widest difference, they could not share a thought, a taste, an emotion. And did he love her still? Surely not as at first; she no longer seemed divinely perfect—yet the soft windings of that hair, those lips, those eyes!

Miss Child also had her reflections: “How Harry’s training has been neglected! Oh, but I’ll soon bring him round to the right views, and show him how to act like other people. He doesn’t know the world yet—the great, foolish fellow!”

She touched his arm.

“Harry, how about that three thousand?” she laughed.

He pressed her hand.

"Dearest, if you make me wait so long, I'll become desperate, and carry you off by force."

And as she walked homeward by his side, with her peculiar dainty steps, and little swinging motion, her hands in her jacket-pockets, her hair caressed by the breeze, he decided that the problem was not to be given up; he would solve it some way.

At dinner, Mrs. Child asked:

"Harry, how is your poor mother? Have you heard from her lately?"

"Yes," he answered, "her health does not improve much. I don't know what to do for her."

"Oh, that is too bad. Give her my love and sympathy. When you make your fortune, Harry, you must take her on a trip somewhere; it would divert her from her sorrow. Don't forget she has only you to depend upon."

After dinner Miss Child proposed to spend the afternoon in the hammocks that were swung on the bluff's edge at the end of the yard.

"Yes, let us," he acquiesced. "And let me read you some Tennyson there."

"Oh, we haven't any poetry books," she said. "And, besides, they are not for Sunday."

"Well, never mind," he laughed, catching her arm. "We'll talk poetry."

And soon they were swinging blithely under the cedar trees, while below the river flashed in the sun, and the wooded hills rolled away to the horizon. And he, with shining eyes, gazed upon her, lightly suspended in the net, with her small slippered feet, and exquisite ankles, her tapering arms under her head. So beautiful, beautiful, and all his own! A love, ungovernable, passionate, possessed him. He threw himself on his knees beside her; and caught her head in his arms.

"Say again you love me!"

She yielded her lips, murmuring, "I do."

Nature, great parent, are you malicious or merely blind?—You smile, O our immortal mother.

XX.

Barret excused himself from the evening service, pleading a headache. He parted from Miss Child at the church door. The pressure of her hand left his heart beating.

On the way back, he, as usual, occupied himself with reflections. He no longer indulged in poetic reveries; he was not boyish enough to linger in that pleasantly pathetic mood. Thrown suddenly into the world of trade, he soon lost the delicate shades of sentiment; his preponderating faculty reasserted itself. He endeavored to set his situation visibly before him, like a problem in chess, to bend the cold engine of analysis upon it.

If his love was less exalted, it was all the stronger for coming down to

earth, all the more tyrannical. Yet it was strange it should be so. If they were already married, how they would hate each other! But they were only engaged. Could he break it off, if she were willing? Could he forget her?—

Forget that matchless girl? those lightly stepping feet? the curves of that waist, those shoulders? that full, white throat? those cheeks, with their changing bloom? the eyes, and their shy meanings, half-hidden by the golden lashes?

Then he recalled the eloquent words of the morning, the description of that high, perfect life, for which he hungered.

And what were his prospects of such a life? To grovel forever in muddy real estate, a human earthworm. Five years, probably ten, before he could marry:—and then, a small village house, a big provincial family and a deaconship in the Methodist church. “A life divided between desk and p w! it goes against my conscience;



it is the vilest of irreligion to degenerate so.—Oh, God! if I could only forget her!—or marry her!”

As he walked through the darkening streets, a mood of desperate depression fell upon him—hopeless, hopeless, and no escape, no conceivable road to contentment! A wild desire to do some reckless thing seized him; all the red blood of his youthful prime clamored for adventurous action. “Curse this age of brick walls and business!” he murmured.

When he opened the door of his room, he was startled by the blaze of three unshaded lamps, standing in a row on the mantle.

“Hello, Barret! come and join us,” said Perry, as he whirled his precious wheel in one direction, and spun the marble in the other. He and his wheel were at the head of the table, on which was spread a white oil-cloth, covered with numbers. Hurd was at the other end, the picture of *ennui*. Seated on his left, were Downer of the office, and

Thompson, with his surly, pugnacious face bent over the wheel. On the other side there was an exceedingly thin young man, whom Hurd introduced as Mr. Vickery. He had a diminutive head, a shrunken, beardless face, a small nose, terminating in a speckled ball, and little, sparkling eyes. He was a consumptive; and, as he put it, was making the best of his time.

Downer was a callow youth of twenty, whose whole soul was bent upon the acquiring of a vitiated exterior, which he found very difficult, owing to his native innocence. He had a long face, with an aristocratic forehead that retreated abruptly from his eyebrows, and immediately vanished under his hair. His long narrow nose left small space for the chin. The hair on his lip was so deficient numerically, that had it been a foot long, it would have born no resemblance to the coveted appendage. He seemed rather timid; and played with magnificent carelessness.



Barret, unremonstrant, sat down between Hurd and Vickery. He played thoughtlessly, with his mind elsewhere; and won. Hurd contented himself with staking deliberately each time one chip upon a space labelled red. Thompson, rapt in serious meditation, played according to some esoteric doctrine; and clamored profanely, when he lost. Vickery wasted his substance with an easy grace, warbling at intervals: "Oho! the merry game, the merry game." He declared finally that he had departed from his last cent; and retiring, he consoled himself with strong drink.

Perry, in his role of Fate, presided gayly over the evening, with much profit. Suddenly, in the midst of an earnest silence, he sang, with one of his bird-like bursts of music, a fragment of an old and touching ballad:

"I wandered down by the little babbling brook.
Its every murmur speaks of thee.—
The thought that thou wilt ne'er be mine
Will break my heart, Margarite."

Barret pushed back his chair.

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"Hurd," he said, "play my counters for me. I think I will retire. I feel exhausted."

"All right, old fellow. Go to bed. You don't look well."

"Damned skin!" growled Thompson, when Barret had gone, "to cut when he's winning."

"Well," Perry said, "I'm banking. I don't see how it affects you."

XXI.

The sun was low behind the towers of the Back Bay. A radiant mist rested over the trees of the Public Garden; and brightened the faces of two young men who were lying in the grass, on the slope of a hill, under the Soldier's Monument. Below them on a wide, bare space of the Common a multitude of men were disporting at baseball, watched by a crowd of enthusiasts, several of whom, overcome by a fever of emulation, had segregated into minor centers of interest. Notwithstanding this activity, a certain stillness pervaded the evening.

"Barret," said Hurd, exhaling slowly the smoke of his cigar, "this is a god-like attitude of ours—looking down at life from this Olympian hill-top, careless of mankind."

"It suits us, Hurd," said Barret languidly.

"I wish it were the Drachenfels," Hurd mused. "I remember lying this way on its summit in the evening once; and the Rhine was like a stream of gold, set with the green island of Nonnenwerth, and its grey old nunnery. Ah, it was beautiful, with a bottle of the red Dragon's Blood beside me, too.— Say, why shouldn't we be there now? What conceivable reason have we for slaving it here?"

"Poverty," his friend suggested.

"Barret, I am going to make you an offer, which it will be unfriendly to refuse. I can't stand this drudgery any longer. And I know how you feel about it. You can't ever make a dog's wages down at that office. Now, see here: you have had a good literary training; and I have enough talent to draw decent illustrations; we are just the pair to work this scheme. I'll furnish the capital. And we'll start next

week for some unhackneyed place; you will write a description of the trip, half humorous, half philosophic; and I'll draw the illustrations. We'll send our work to a fellow I know who makes a business of placing manuscripts; he will sell it for us. We will make money; we can live abroad for almost nothing; we'll stay there forever; and never see this cursed shop-country again!—What do you say?"

They were both looking off at the sky. The sun had vanished; and the stained clouds were fading in the twilight.

"Hurd, I thank you sincerely. There is nothing I would like better—but I can't."

Hurd did not speak for a while. The crowd scattered from the Common; a fortress of grey clouds was building above the city; a pair of blackbirds flew nestward in the dusk.

"Barret, I have never spoken to you about your engagement. Let me congratulate you now."

"Thanks, Hurd;—but I don't think I should be congratulated."

They were both gazing up into space.

"I would give ten years of my life," Barret went on, "to have never met her,—not that I don't want to marry her, but because I can't."

"Perry has a characteristic theory concerning love," Hurd said in his slow, deliberate way: "he holds that the two sexes are at war with each other; and, as is the way in war, the only method of protecting one's self is to slay as many as possible of the enemy,—to break hearts, he says, is the only way to keep your own from being broken.—Well, well, let us go back to our room."

They were silent on the way. The clouds were matted thickly above; the warm breath of a summer storm was in the air.

For the space of half an hour they smoked moodily in the room, Barret on the lounge, Hurd in his chair. At

length Hurd spoke out of his engulfing cloud:

"Do you find her congenial?—intellectually, I mean."

"No."

"And yet you want to marry her?"

"No difference, since I can't."

There was another silence.

"Hurd, I stick here, not because I hope to succeed, but because I can't leave,—that is, I can't—I don't want to."

"Well," Hurd mused, "perhaps Perry's theory is right. Anyhow, there is no greater curse than a genuine passion, a real affection."

"But you are free; why don't you go, Hurd?"

"Oh, I must look after you," Hurd smiled. "You would be committing suicide, or marrying on five dollars a week, if I were gone.—No, I'll wait for you."

"Wait for me?"

"Why, yes. You don't suppose this will last forever, do you? All

things have an end—beauty, hope, patience.”

“ Except drudgery,” Barret added.

“ Yes, yes, that’s so. And when you stop to look at it, what an absurdity it is. Men have been clamoring for freedom ever since they had sense enough to feel. And here they are, in this enlightened age, chaining themselves of their own free will,—accepting, with open eyes, the most abject slavery. It is a mere bondage to a custom. They make money an end, not a means. For, look at a man who has made a fortune: what is he fit for, but to make another. Or, if he is too old, he sits and guards his hoard, like a dragon in the Eddas, waiting to leave it to some remote relative, a dissipated son, or a useless charity.—Good God! success itself is not desirable! I can’t discover a single attraction in this life we’re leading, a single excuse for it!—unless, perhaps, as Keats suggested, ‘It serves to show how quiet death is.’ ”

"Oh, Hurd, it is useless to fight against a law of nature, however hard it may be on us. What would become of the social organism, if every one refused to perform his allotted function? The fact is we are cells in the muscle of the state. What's the use of our trying to act the part of brain-matter?"

"Well, Barret, granting that pretty theory of yours, for the sake of the argument, will you kindly point out where those brain cells are? I have never discovered them in this wonderful body of the state. You could hardly claim that role for our politicians. And, then, who make up the organs of imagination and reflection? It seems those organs have been amputated; and their unfortunate cells are all disintegrated; and left to go it alone. Now, you have acknowledged that we are not suited to this muscular business. Don't you see that we ourselves belong to that unhappy amputated organ? So let us float around as we must.—One

of those old cells, who is now dried up, and gone, secreted once a very pretty drop of reflection:

‘He ne’er was born
For immortality who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead.’

And they lead you out into the open world, on the case of a higher life, as they led Endymion.—And you remember those lines in ‘Wilhelm Meister’:

‘Keep not standing, fixed and rooted,
Briskly venture, briskly roam :
Head and hand, where e’er thou foot it,
And stout heart, are still at home.
In each land the sun does visit :
We are gay what e’er betide ;
To give space for wand’ring is it
That the world was made so wide.

There, the final words from the wisest of our century; hear them; and then look at this life of ours, drying our selves up, like smoked hams,—and all for nothing, no reward.”

“I know it, I feel it, Hurd; but, as I told you, I can’t help it.”

“Well, let’s go to bed; and forget it all for an hour or two.—Perry is not coming home to-night.”

Barret could not sleep; he lay feverish and wakeful, with his back to Hurd, staring at the wall. He thought he was growing delirious. All the blood of his body seemed to be rushing to his brain. Visions of unutterable gloom visited him—memories of his father lying dead, and his mother laughing beside him, with her hands clutched in her hair. Then he gazed, as into a wizard's crystal, upon dark forecastings of his own fate; he saw the phantom of himself, aging at his desk, hollow-chested, hollow-eyed, nerveless and poor. And there was she, not old, but still beautiful and bright; and she was looking at his wasted self with a smile of disappointment, half disdainfully. And who was that who took her by the hand, urging her away?—She followed, but looked back wistfully. Then music came. But he could not make out whether it was a wedding, or a funeral, march.

He felt an arm thrown round him. He spoke to his bed-fellow. But he

did not answer; he was sleeping heavily.

Barret got up; and paced the sitting-room till dawn. He leaned his forehead against the window, looking out on the grey, dripping streets.

He could see nothing possible before him that he wanted much.

XXII.

“It is time Barret was back,” Hurd remarked, as he dropped a slice of lemon into his glass.

“Curse the girl!” said Perry. “I’ve a good mind to elope with her myself, just to relieve him.”

“That’s very unselfish of you, my son; but it would be too great a sacrifice.—Let me propose your fair cousin’s speedy dissolution.”

“I’m with you,” Perry laughed.

Hurd diverted his thoughts by manufacturing many complex and delicate mixtures for himself and his “son.” But he was evidently worried. At length he said solemnly, looking at the clock:

"Perry, the last train was due an hour ago."

"It is queer," Perry acknowledged. "And he said he didn't sleep last night. Do you know, ever since our little game two nights ago, he has been deucedly down in the mouth."

"I tell you, Perry, this thing mustn't go on. It's all our fault; we ought to do something."

"That's so;—I might show him a little more of the town," Perry suggested hopefully.

"I don't know," Hurd mused; and lapsed into a dismal meditation.

Suddenly the door opened; and Barrett appeared.

"Well," he said, with a forced smile, "are you fellows carousing?"

"You bet your face we are!" cried Perry. "You missed the chance of your lifetime: the Prophet's been mixing cocktails; and they're tall ones, I tell you.—Try this."

For the next half-hour, Hurd worked as he had never been known to do be-

fore. A satyr-like sprightliness possessed his torpid person; he flitted about, like Hebe at the table of the gods; his face glowed and perspired; he talked incessantly. Barret himself became almost gay, under these Ampeilian offices. At length he walked restlessly to the window.

“Fellows, I feel adventurous.”

“So do I,” said Perry. “Now if the Prophet will think up a crime, we’ll commit it together. What do you say?”

“Well,” the Prophet pondered obligingly, “I think it is an inspired suggestion. It is just the evil hour of midnight. Let’s see: shall we burgle?”

“Burgle what?” asked Perry.

“Well, there’s shop-signs; we used to steal them at college.—Oh, I tell you: do you remember Lockhart, in Junior year, stealing an old tombstone, for his mantel-piece?”

“By all the thieves at once! the very thing!” Perry shouted. “That old

graveyard in the Common; we can take one of those mouldy little foot stones, easy as falling off a log."

Instantly, without further speech, the conclave made its decision. Hurd seized the fire-shovel. They started. Columbus avenue was deserted and silent, as they walked down, arm in arm, concealing the instrument of evil. They passed one policeman, who examined them curiously, but said nothing. They entered the Common; it was delightfully dark. They selected the obscurest spot; and, with infinite difficulty, got Hurd over the tall iron fence of the graveyard.

When they were all upon the scene of action, there came a long argument to the end that Hurd should extinguish his cigar, which he sternly refused to do.

"Well," said Perry in despair, "it's no use; he's in one of his fits of sternness. He often does it, and about some little thing. Now, if there was

every reason why he should blow his nose, and he really wanted to himself, and all his friends wanted him to; he wouldn't; ten cops couldn't make him."

Hurd meanwhile had taken the shovel; and was digging clumsily at the nearest stone, his cigar scintillating in the darkness.

"Oh, the devil!" Perry protested, "we couldn't begin to lift that. Try a small one."

But Hurd would neither move, nor speak. So the other two sat on neighboring headstones; and watched him helplessly.

"Good lord!" said Perry, kicking his heels against an epitaph, "the thing must have a foundation like a house!"

Suddenly an uproar sounded close behind them—the noise of a club beating on the iron fence.

Perry was off like a flash, Barret at his heels; over graves and bushes, around trees, down into a deep trench,

up the opposite terrace, over the fence, they didn't stop till they reached a remote shade.

"Where's Hurd?" Barret gasped.

"Could the old idiot have stayed there?" Perry panted.

"Let's go back, and see."

They crept along, keeping under the trees, till they were within thirty feet of the disastrous spot. And there, sure enough, was Hurd, smoking on a tombstone, *tête-à-tête* with the officer on the other side of the fence.

"He must have been afraid the cop would shoot," Perry whispered.

In a few minutes the patrol wagon dashed up. And Hurd was ordered to come out. But he declared solemnly that he couldn't. The lock of the gate had to be broken. Then Hurd walked tranquilly forth; and entered the vehicle, still pulling at the stump of his cigar.

XXIII.

Barret was in the midst of a dream about Hurd being hanged by the neck, and refusing to give up either his cigar or his ghost, when he was waked by a cold object placed against his head, and a violent din in his ears. The room was grey in the early dawn; and Perry in his flaming pajamas, a wet towel wound turbanwise upon his head, was holding his alarm clock, which still kept up its intolerable clamor.

“The only way I could wake you up,” Perry explained.

“Well, what’s the matter?”

“What are we going to do about the prophet?” he asked.

“Oh, he’s all right,” Barret said consolingly; “it’s just trespassing, or some-

thing of that sort. He'll have to pay a small fine; and they'll let him off. We'll probably see him at lunch."

Perry sat a while in thought. Then, shaking his head forbodingly, he went back to his room.

At lunch Hurd did not appear. His two friends were greatly worried.

"We've got to go and see about him," said Perry.

"Yes," Barret agreed, "immediately."

They went to the police court; and were shown to an office in which an official of the establishment was writing.

"We have come," Perry began, with his hands in his trousers pockets, "to enquire about a fellow by the name of Hurd, who arrived late last night."

The official smiled sardonically, as he referred to a great canvas-covered volume on his desk.

"No such name," he said.

The two visitors started to go; but Perry turned back.

"May I look at your list? I have another acquaintance who I believe has been here."

The request was granted angrily; Perry ran his eye down the last column. Suddenly he started, and turned pale; but said in a collected tone:

"Yes; here he is." He read: "Number 116. George Hearing. Attempt at body-snatching. Thirty days."—Can we see him?"

"Go to the jail on Charles street, and find out."

They departed, dazed and horrified.

"This is awful!" Perry groaned. "I feel as though we had deserted him."

"We did, Perry. Can't we get him out of this?"

"I don't know. But I'm ashamed to see him."

Fortunately it was Wednesday, visitors' day; and they were permitted to enter. They followed the turnkey through the dolorous halls; he stopped

at the door of number 116; unlocked it; and they entered with shamed faces.

The light from a high, narrow grating revealed Hurd, spread on a cot, sketching in a blank book, smoking placidly.

"Hello!" he said. "This is jolly. I didn't know they caught you."

"They didn't, old man," said Perry, looking sorrowful, at the bed's foot; "but if you're lonely, we'll give ourselves up."

"Indeed, no," Hurd smiled; "I'm not lonely; in fact, the place pleases me much. I'll have some time for my art now; this thing makes a passable lounge; and they let me smoke: so there's nothing more to be desired."

"But," said Barret, as he sat down on the solitary stool, "it's a sort of a dis— that is, what will your friends think?"

"They wont know; I changed my name for the occasion. I think I am

justifiable in using a pseudonym—specially since the charge was false."

"How did they convict you of body-snatching, anyhow?" Perry enquired.

"Oh, that cursed shovel, and the hole I dug.—I asked the judge if it was customary to 'snatch' with a fire-shovel, and carry the deceased off in your arms. But he said the law couldn't be asked to swallow the assertion that any normal citizen would go to that length for a rotten foot-stone; yet on consideration of the strong evidence of mental derangement, he would let me off with a fine of a hundred dollars—which I declined with thanks. Then we compromised on thirty days."

Here Perry fell upon the bed in an ecstasy of laughter.

"You absurd old ass!" he roared. "You've got to come out of this. You'll disgrace your son."

"Of course, Hurd," Barret interposed, "you mustn't stay here; we'll

get the money, and be back in half an hour."

"Well, I guess not. You fellows don't own a cent between you. I could afford the hundred all right, if I wanted to pay it; but I don't; and, besides, it's too late now. I'll never forgive you, if you make me leave this place; it is just the chance I've been wishing for—no work for a month, all day to cultivate my talent. You fellows leave me alone; and don't spoil my vacation!"

"Time's up," said the turnkey, opening the door.

The two callers departed in perplexity; and left Hurd gazing fondly on the convolutions of his Havana smoke.

XXIV

"Well," said Barret, as he threw himself on the lounge, "I say we pawn our watches, our clothes, everything; and pay his fine. I can't understand why he wants to disgrace himself."

Perry, with his feet on the table, looked mournfully at Hurd's vacant chair.

"No: it's no use. He has refused to pay his fine; and accepted his sentence. I don't believe it's possible to get him out, for love or money, now. We might, if he hadn't given all that guff to the judge. But, anyhow, he wouldn't come out. He gets unmanageable this way, every once in a while; and you can't persuade him to act like a reasonable being."

"Why, what's the matter with him?"

"Oh, I never could make out exactly. He used to do it at college. He gets blue, gets stern, and simply won't do anything, but lie on his back, and smoke, and draw absurd pictures."

"Pictures of what?" Barret asked absently.

"Just little scratches and scrawls that don't look like anything much. But I think they are about the stuff he saw when he was abroad."

They discussed all afternoon the remarkable situation of their friend; and concluded that nothing could be done. Perry would report that he was "laid up"—a conveniently ambiguous statement. And they would wait patiently till he subdued the irresponsible demon that possessed him.

At dinner Perry said:

"I've got an engagement at the variety show to-night. You had better come along, Barret; it will cheer you up."

"No, thanks, Perry, not to-night. I'm tired out; I will go to bed early."

"Pshaw, you'll be lonely. And I'm booked for all night to-morrow."

"Oh, I'll get along," Barret answered.

He went to the deserted room; lay down, as usual, on the lounge; and thought over many things, while he watched the daylight dying. He began moodily to pull at his moustache. It occurred to him that he must look a good deal as his father used—gloomily pulling his moustache,

How swiftly life was passing, and how fruitlessly. He was getting on in years; and yet no progress—nothing done. But his father had started all over again, late in life, and sick and feeble too. Yet what use? Ruined in the end—ruin and death in the end. And he himself would be another victim.—Why did he get along so slowly, and she waiting, too?

A strange love was theirs—strong as death; and yet every meeting seemed

to find them further apart—to hang greater barriers between. “Well, well, as old Hurd says, everything has an end.”

He looked at Hurd’s chair stretching out in the dusk. He half expected to see a cigar gleam above it. A loneliness, a depression irresistible came over him.

Why not give it all up, join Hurd, accept his offer; and when they were free,—but no: he couldn’t leave her. God! God! how would it end?

Utterly exhausted, he undressed, and went to bed; but those fevering thoughts rioted with tumult in his brain. A sense of emptiness was in his body; some dread event seemed hanging over him. Again dark visions of the future came, and mocked him. Sleep was impossible. He heard Perry come in, and throw off his clothes. Then all was still.

Was this a fever? How hot the night was. The gusts that came through the window were like the breath of a sirocco storm.

Toward morning he fell into a restless sleep; and woke on a day heavy and drenched with a humid heat. Clouds hung low without rain.

The office felt like a Turkish bath; the ink soaked into the paper. He felt a hand on his shoulder. Turning, he saw the junior partner.

He was a young man, but withered, dessicated. The compressed aspect of his features, and the untuneful quality of his voice always gave the impression that some one had recently tweaked his nose.

"Why weren't you here yesterday afternoon?" he demanded harshly.

Barret suddenly realized that he could give no excuse.

"I had something that necessitated my absence."

"Do you suppose we can afford to let our clerks go off when they please?"

Barret said nothing; Downer expressed his appreciation of the dialogue by a fatuous chuckle. The junior partner sneered in his nasal voice:

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“If you think because you are a cousin of our secretary, you can do as you like, you are mistaken.”

Barret stood up; the blood flew to his face, then left it white.

“No, no, I am not a dependent of my cousin’s, nor a chattel of yours. If I understand it, you haven’t a deed of purchase on my person, but merely one of rent—which expires now.”

He took up his hat; and walked composedly from the office.

How welcome was even the close air of the street. At last he was free. The cursed bondage was broken. Fate had decided for him.

XXV.

The evening found him on his way to Glenrock. All day he had been pondering how to utilize his freedom. He formed a brilliant plan to write a thesis on The Decline of the Industrial Era; and, pacing his room, he shaped the whole theme definitely in his mind. Ideas fresh and original came rapidly; flashes of insight thrilled him with assurance of success. He bought a great ream of paper, and mapped out the skeleton of the essay. Now he would do something worthy of himself.

Eager to tell the good news, he waited once more in the stifling little parlor. A servant came in, and lighted the lamp, which immediately split its

chimney, and filled the room with smoke. He ran, and turned down the wick. When he looked up, she was smiling on him.

"Oh, what a mess you've been making!" she said.

They sat down on the sofa. The air was close, and vile with the smell of oil.

"It has been a very depressing day, hasn't it?" he began.

"Yes. I thought of you working through it, Harry."

There was a pause.

"I have a new scheme. If it works, it will bring money and fame."

"Oh, what is it?" she smiled.

"I have begun an essay for a magazine."

"Have you!" she laughed, clasping her hands around her knee. "Well, I hope you'll succeed; but you mustn't be discouraged if they don't accept it," she counselled, with a wise little air. "When will you find time to write?"

"Oh, I'll find time," he said; and immediately became thoughtful.

"You mustn't neglect your business," she said.

"No," he answered absently. "But, dearest, let us build some air-castles," he went on. "In the first one there will be a wedding." He kissed her hand, and held it. "The next will be a castle in some beautiful land—in Venice, say."

"Oh, not abroad," she broke in; "I don't like foreigners. America is good enough for me. I'm afraid you're not patriotic, Harry."

"But think of our castle in Venice," he plead, "and all the princes of Italy at your feet. And we'll be famous and free, and live where we like."

"Oh!" she laughed, "and is all this to come from your article? Now, Harry, what's the use of wishing for all that. You have found it isn't easy to make a bare living; you could never afford to leave your business."

"I have left it," he announced desperately.

"What! given up your place?"

"Yes. They insulted me, and I left."

"Oh! you're a smart one!" she lashed out bitterly. "You could never get along. What is the use of my waiting for you, and giving up all the pleasure a girl has before she's engaged?" Her voice grew hard, tearful.

"Well," he said, wildly, "I suppose there isn't any use."

"All right, sir!"

She pulled off her ring, threw it in his lap, and ran from the room.

He looked a moment stupidly at the little circle of gold, at the diamond. Then he walked out of the house.

The door closed; she rushed from the darkened dining room, and laid her hand on the knob. But she did not turn it. She ran to the parlor window, pushed back the curtain, and peered out.

He was standing in the path, still blankly gazing at the ring. He turned

once toward her, then walked rapidly away.

She stood motionless, half smiling, looking out into the night. Suddenly her face paled, and she sank upon her knees.

XXVI.

Now it was settled forever—all settled. The torture of a useless effort was over. There was a strange relief in this; hope is not always a blessing. He was free; yet now when the world was open to him, it seemed empty.

He remembered how on his first call he had walked home; and so he would to-night. Home? who was left? what friend? what sympathy? He had no mutual ground with Perry; nor, in truth, even with his mother. And old warm-hearted Hurd had left him, too. The one he loved the most was dead—his father. Why not go where he was lying; there might be some sympathy in the place—he might as well go there.



The sky was a monotonous black; one spot alone was glimmering, faintly silvered by the moon; the earth lay still and dark; he stumbled once or twice on the uneven path. He passed through several vacant, desolate towns, crossed a bridge over the Charles; and reached the cemetery. But the gate was locked; he could not enter. So he walked around to a point nearest the grave; and pressed his face against the iron bars of the fence. He could distinguish only a few monuments raising their vague spectral columns in the darkness.

Generous, unfortunate, brave father, he, too, had loved the girl,—perhaps for his son's sake.—Ah, he fought nobly with his fate!—And perhaps with all his brightness, he was unhappy, too. Well, his struggling is over—struggling, at least, ends at the grave. It must be so—the aching nerves soothed in the dust. He felt envious of it. Sleep, sleep is the best

part of life; and often hard to get. And, then, if there were a Heaven, and justice there; if a man had done his best, it must be well.

But why was he thinking of this? He was not going to die. He would go back to his room. —No, he was not going to die. He would forget the past, wipe out its memories. Not to begin a new life, no: he had staked, and lost; and he was tired. Now he would go ambitiousless through life, looking upon it calmly; and perhaps when hope was gone, peace might come.

In his room he looked again at the ring. He thought of throwing it into the street; but suddenly he laughed, almost aloud.

He would sell it, and go away—what a joke!

He put it carefully in his purse.

Yes, he would start to-morrow. Let's see, the trunk had not been unpacked since he came, except the books; he would take a few books

He began to select his favorites from the shelf—his sociologies, his Tennyson. And there was his de Musset; he had read a few of the poems, and liked them. He opened to his favorite—"La Nuit de Decembre."

"Je ressemblais des lettres de la veille,
Des cheveux, des débris d'amour,
Tout ce passé me criait à l'oreille
Ses éternals serments d'un jour."

Those eternal vows of a day! And where were his *débris d'amour*? He took from his trunk a portfolio, and emptied it on the table: two notes and a little torn handkerchief. He read over one of the notes; he had received it hardly more than a week ago.

My own HARRY:—I will love to go with you to Trinity. Meet me in the station at half-past nine. You must be good and listen to the sermon.

Your loving

MARY.

He did not read the other; but burned them both over the lamp. The handkerchief would not burn; so he put it in his pocket.

XXVII.

He slept well that night—the first time for many weeks. He rose early; and wrote three letters—to his mother, to Perry and to Hurd. This was the last.

DEAR HURD:—My affairs have come to a crisis. I am going to Europe on the next steamer. I wish I could see you before I go, but I can't wait till next Wednesday. I will write from New York the name of the steamer.

Please don't think that in taking this step, I am relying on that kind offer you made me once. I really feel that it would be robbing you of your small capital. And besides I would not be a very cheerful companion.

Good bye, old fellow. I want to thank you sincerely for all your kindness. You have been my best, my only friend.

Affectionately,
HENRY BARRET.



He left on the table the letters to Perry and Hurd; and mailed his mother's. Then he went for a cab, took his trunk to the station; and drove to the jeweller's. He told the proprietor that his family had dealt there many years; and now he was in need of money; and wished to sell this ring for three-quarters its value. The proprietor hesitated; but, impressed with the look of the young man, accepted the bargain for a hundred and fifty dollars.

Barret arrived at New York in the late afternoon; and went directly down town to Cook's office. A steamer on the Red Star line sailed for Antwerp the next morning. He bought the cheapest first class passage for forty-five dollars.

In the evening he wrote to Hurd; and walked over to look at his old home. It was dingy, and curtainless; there was a doctor's sign in the window, proclaiming a specialty in diseases of the nose.

He went across to Jersey City in the morning; and boarded the steamer. It was very crowded; the saloon was filled with flowers; people were frantically trying to find, at the same time, their letters, state-rooms, friends, and deck-chairs.

He felt isolated, lonely, blue.

Suddenly the doleful roar of the whistle sounded; every body began to weep; the visitors were put off; and a tug-boat began to pull at the stern.

Barret went down to his stateroom; and found four men in it, fighting for its possession. He went back to the deck, and sat down in a chair; but learned at once that he was using another's property. The deck of the second class passengers seemed less crowded; so he went there, and paced up and down.

Most of the people wore an expression of stern resolve—not to get sick, he supposed. The harbor lay bright

in the morning; the sun sparkled on the bronze giantess of liberty, on the high brick buildings of the city, on the white houses of Staten Island. They passed some feeble-looking forts, out through the Narrows, and rolled on the long waves of the Atlantic.

Barret did not respond with enthusiasm to any advances; and immediately became an object of dark conjecture. Two fine days were followed by three of storm. He spent most of the time curled up on the seats of the smoking room; while the other surviving passengers endeavored to gamble under the most trying circumstances. Water dashed through the doors and windows; and a wave, bearing three cuspidors and a number of cards, slushed from side to side on the floor, with chilling effect.

XXVIII.

It was late in the night of the ninth day out; they expected to be in the Channel to-morrow. The storm had died away; and many fair days had followed.

The state-rooms were insufferably hot; Barret had determined to sleep on deck. He was pacing at the stern, his hands in his coat pockets, his lips stretched tight.

He had been wondering lately what he was going to do when he landed; he had become very despondent about it. Not that he regretted anything—to stay in America was impossible. And yet how was he to live? He could

speak no foreign language; he had refused Hurd's offer—he felt that he couldn't bear a companion; he wanted to be alone. Yet at times a sense of his isolation came with the cold touch of despair, in the solitude of the heartless laughter around him, in the loneliness of the sea.

He leaned over the railing of the deck, and looked out upon the calm night. The sky was windless and bare, save for a few unravelled shreds of cloud, and a vague haze on the round horizon. The moon, half-waned, touched the placid waves of the ocean with dashes of soft, mellow light. The smoke from the funnel stretched away in a long level line. The whole length of the ship lay before him, slightly heaving its masts and cordage against the silvered distance.

The old adage was true, then,—Life is a battle. And he somehow had no taste for struggling, for making his way. And if he didn't want success,

why should he be forced into the struggle for it? Wasn't there some way of living quietly? It seemed not, it seemed not. But what was the use of fighting for things he didn't want? what use? Only, as Hurd had said, "It serves to show how quiet death is."

The noise of some one on the lower deck aroused him. He saw a stoker lean, panting, over the rail amidship. This was a common occurrence; and it did not startle him. He watched the forlorn creature with a certain sympathy; his face and bared breast were greasy, and covered with coal dust; his eyes had a strange glare out of his sooty brows.

Another victim to the struggle—yes, they were both in the same plight.

"My God!"

The man climbed feebly over the rail, and dropped like a rag. His face rose close under Barret. He cried out once, and sank.

Barret took his knife, and cut the fastenings of a life-buoy. Suddenly he thought:

"Why not try to save him? It would be sort of an excuse."

He threw over the buoy; stood up an instant on the rail; then dived far out from the ship's side.

How deep he was sinking! What was that frightful noise?

He felt a sense of surprise — amazement.

How did he come into that cold water?

He struck out automatically for the surface. Already the ship was a great way off.

How small and unfamiliar it seemed.

Then he remembered he was to rescue the stoker. But he could not see him. He swam off a few strokes; then turned over on his back, and floated quietly. The smooth, long swells lifted him gently; the night was surpassingly still.

XXIX.

“‘It serves to show how quiet death is,’” he repeated, smiling up at the stars.

When would it come? he wondered; and would it be easy and soon?

He did not think about the past, or of anything much; he floated without effort, except a slow movement of the hands. His clothes kept him warm enough. He would like to float on this way forever, he thought.

He put his hand up to brush back the wet hair from his forehead. This made him sink a little to one side; and the crest of a wave broke over his face. The salt water was gasped into his nose and throat, choking him painfully; he

had hardly enough breath to keep his head above the surface.

"O God! is it like this!"

To sink into that bitter salt—to sink so deep, the whole ocean would force it into his lungs—writhing down, down miles under the water!—Oh, the world was beautiful, and life was sweet, even in its pain.

He raised his head as high as he could. The steamer was far and dim; nothing else on all the wide circle of the sea. But what was that that gleamed a second on a near wave?—the buoy.

He had just enough strength to swim to it, and rest his head upon it. But what good would it do; he felt he couldn't keep his hold many hours. He clung to that frail ring of cork in an agony of dread. Clearer and clearer was revealed the awfulness of death.

Life, life, even a stoker's life, would be thankful! Oh, death was loathsome, horrible!

He felt with a shudder that his strength was ebbing. Another wave dashed its brine into his throat. An unutterable sickness was in his body. A confusing dizziness rocked the world. The universe was dissolving over his head.

XXX.

Suddenly, in his half-consciousness, he realized that something had caught hold of him. He struggled feebly to escape. But it dragged him from the buoy. Then he thought it was lifting him up. He felt beneath him a firm, hard substance; he heard faintly the voices of men.

They held a flask to his lips; rowed back to the steamer; and carried him asleep to his berth.

They had noticed the cry of the stoker; and had seen some one floating astern: but an ocean steamer, at full speed, takes a long space to stop.

For twenty-four hours Barret slept, with occasional half-awaken-

ings. When he awoke at last, it was morning, and the slow, even motion of the vessel told him they had reached some harbor. It seemed he had the state-room to himself. He sat up; and looked through the open port-hole.

There was land, and what a land! a little town, like a toy, shining in the sun, with its bright red roofs, queer steeples, trees all exactly alike, and standing in straight, stiff rows, and a windmill waving its curious arms. They were entering the mouth of the Scheldt.

All the novelty and the promise of the scene welcomed him to a new existence. His old buoyancy and courage had returned. A rich joy in living, a fine eagerness for motion, was in his blood.

He rose, and dressed, but did not go on deck; he stood there in his state-room, looking out. Alert, with renascent vigor, every nerve tense with curiosity, he responded keenly to the

enchantment of the quaintest of countries. Strange, delightful was it all: the bordering dike, with its row of artificial-looking trees, the level land stretching away, broken only by lonesome wind-mills.

At length the river narrowed suddenly. And he saw in the distance the cathedral-spire of Antwerp, girdled by its flying buttresses that terraced slenderly toward the top.

When they had made fast to the dock, he could scarcely keep himself below, till the other passengers should be gone. He paced the little room impetuously.

"I will succeed!" he murmured. "I will travel and write, or work for the papers, even turn waiter at some restaurant. I will make my way somehow."

There was a knock; the door was thrown open. And there, in a great Dutch cap of many colors, a flannel shirt, his loose coat thrown open, his

face, a cigar, wreathed in smiles, was Hurd.

“Hurd!”

“Barret.”

They stood, without speaking, a minute, their hands clasped, beaming on each other.

“You old prophet! how did you get here?”

“By Liverpool! I gave you three days start, and beat you. But I had to pay my little bill at my Charles Street lodgings.—Well, are you ready for a campaign? We’re to invade Holland; and work our old scheme, you know.”

The afternoon was drawing to a close. The reunited friends sat together high on the cathedral tower, gazing in silent enjoyment over the boundless view. Night was already in the city; noises lost themselves far below. The sun was falling to the distant verge of Zeeland, gilding the light, eternal vapor that rises from the

sea, the rivers, the canals; till it rested like an apotheosis on the low, rich land, the quiet, scattered towns, the spectral wind-mills, with their slow-revolving arms.

“Hurd, this is divine. Think of it, no more haste, worry and struggling, but one long existence in these matchless lands, expanding steadily and tranquilly. And our work, instead of drudgery, will be the spontaneous fruit of our growth.”

“Yes,” Hurd answered, “we’ll find the greatest good in life, a work that suits us.” He smoked thoughtfully a moment. “Barret, before I started I was given a commission, which I accepted reluctantly. It is a very delicate commission, and concerns you.—But, maybe, a proposition from America would not interest you now?”

Barret pulled his hat down to his eyes. For a while, without speaking, he looked off intently at the sun melting away in its own radiance. Finally he said:

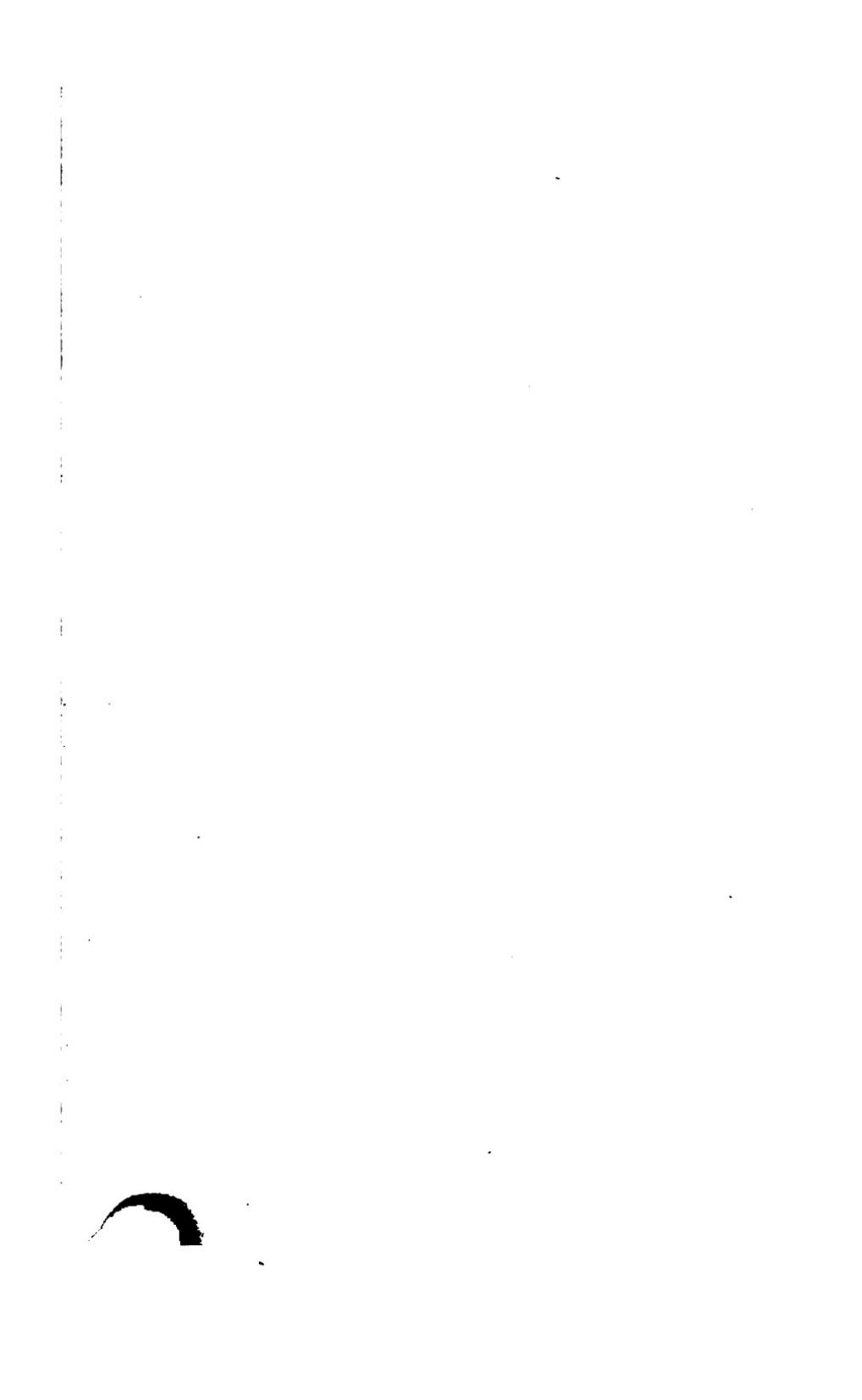
“No, I think not.”

Hurd struck a match; and taking a letter from his pocket, burned it to ashes, and crumbled it under his foot.

“Barret, *now* I *can* congratulate you.”

THE END.

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